

THE FORUM GAZETTE

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S.G.P.C Count Down

The entire attention of Punjab watchers was focussed on the SGPC meet at Anandpur on the 16th October 1987. The general-body of the SGPC—often deemed the parliament of the Sikhs—was scheduled to elect the executive for the year 1987-88. The Akalis who constitute the entire membership of the effective 142 house were divided into factions as a result of their political and factional wrangles. All the factions were in the political wilderness because the Akalis in spite of 73 legislators in the Assembly had lost power to the presidential rule in the state.

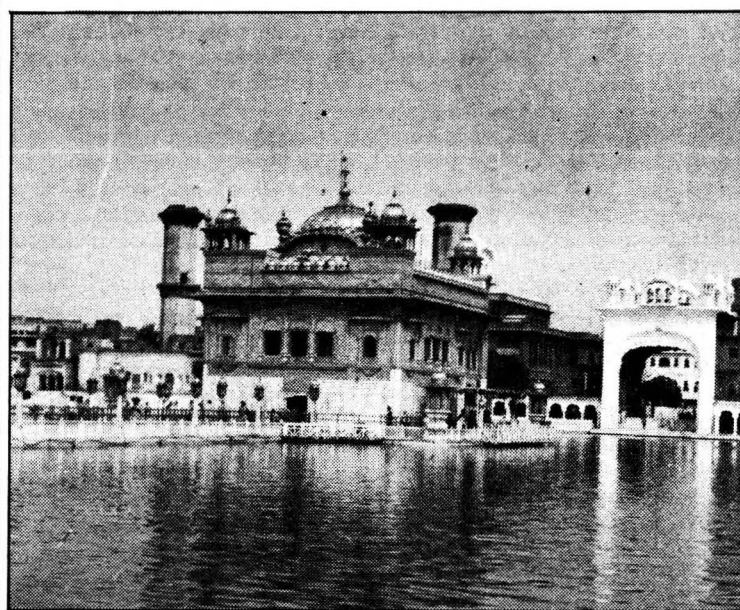
People keen to see recovery of political health in Punjab expected that the SGPC elections might show a way out of the collapse of democracy in Punjab. One possibility was unification of the divided Akalis. Thus united they could have asserted their political rights and contributed to the restoration of normalcy in the

state. The other possibility was the emergence of solid majority of either the Tohra faction or the Barnala faction in the executive of the SGPC. This would have signified the emergence of a prevailing part within the divided Akali tradition. Such prevailing part would have functioned as the nucleus of stability in the

politics of the Panth.

The events, however, belied both the expectations. The Akalis kept up their reputation of incorrigible factionalism. They will now certainly keep up the other part of their tradition i.e. accusing the centre for keeping them divided and querrilling. Long live the tradition.

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The Mess

In the mess which is Punjab now it needs stressed that the militants are anxious to assert themselves as the only spokesmen of the Sikh community. They know the Akalis too well and are sure of rendering them irrelevant not only for the state but also for the SGPC. In this situation the Akalis are caught in between a powerful vice. On the one hand the union government thinks that they are

incapable of managing the state, on the other the militants preach amongst the Sikh masses that they are incapable of running SGPC and the gurdwara establishment. Prolonged pressure of these two opposing forces will erode the middle ground represented by the Akalis in Punjab. The consequences for democracy in India will be far-reaching.

The elections of the executive committee of the SGPC this year have ended up in bizarre

Continued on page 4

Sri Lanka: The Indian Dilemma

Having signed the Accord with Sri Lanka government and undertaken the security of Tamil Minority in Sri Lanka but having entered into armed conflict with Tamil

militant group LTTE the Indian government is faced with a number of paradoxes. On the one hand the critics of the accord in India are viewing it as failure of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's

foreign policy and another piece of evidence to show that he rushes to sign accords that are usually unworkable. On the other hand Tamils in India are feeling concerned at Indian

Peace Keeping Force's confrontation with Tamils in Sri Lanka. Finally Sri Lankan Politician's including its Prime Minister are blaming India for sponsoring terrorism, destruction of democratic system and attempts for dismembering their country.

The Accord

It is generally felt that an accord between Tamil militant groups, especially the LTTE and the Sri Lanka government would without doubt have been a better deal than Delhi. But, for various reasons, that did not materialise, despite India's best efforts for years. The LTTE was intransigent all the time and the Sri Lankan government ambivalent and dilatory. The prospect was that Sinhalese and Tamils would continue to kill one another. What obtained until the accord was a bloody and protracted stalemate. Throughout this period, New Delhi's support for the militants was more or less unqualified, though it was committed to preserving the unity of the island republic. It sought

A. S. Narang

through diplomatic means to pressure Colombo to abandon the search for a military solution and to pursue a political one instead. India was reasonably successful in compelling Colombo to suspend its military operations in Jaffna.

Having signed the accord, the security of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka became New Delhi's responsibility, and it naturally felt it could count on the support of the militants, not least the LTTE, to help it in this task. Under the accord, Sri Lankan troops were to return to

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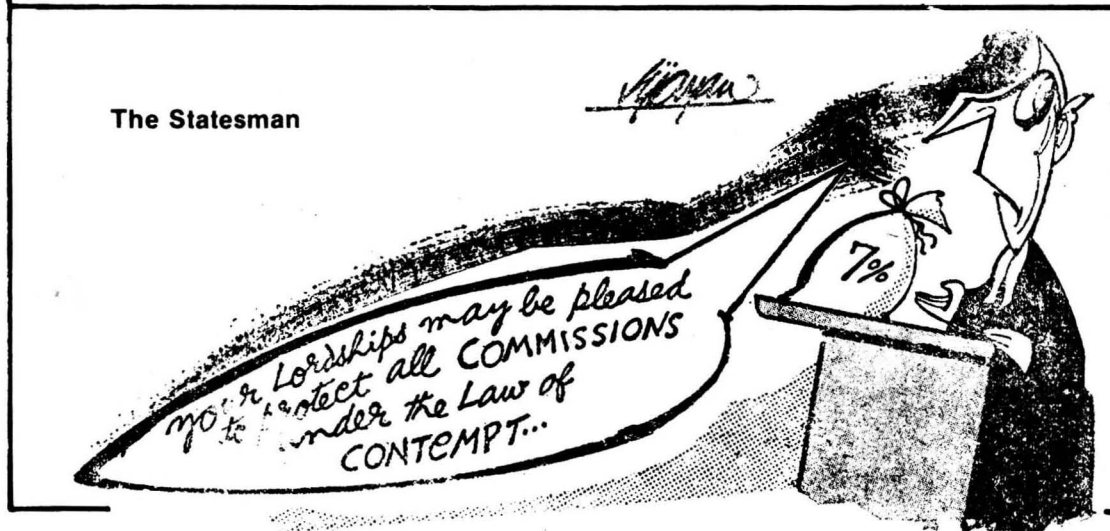
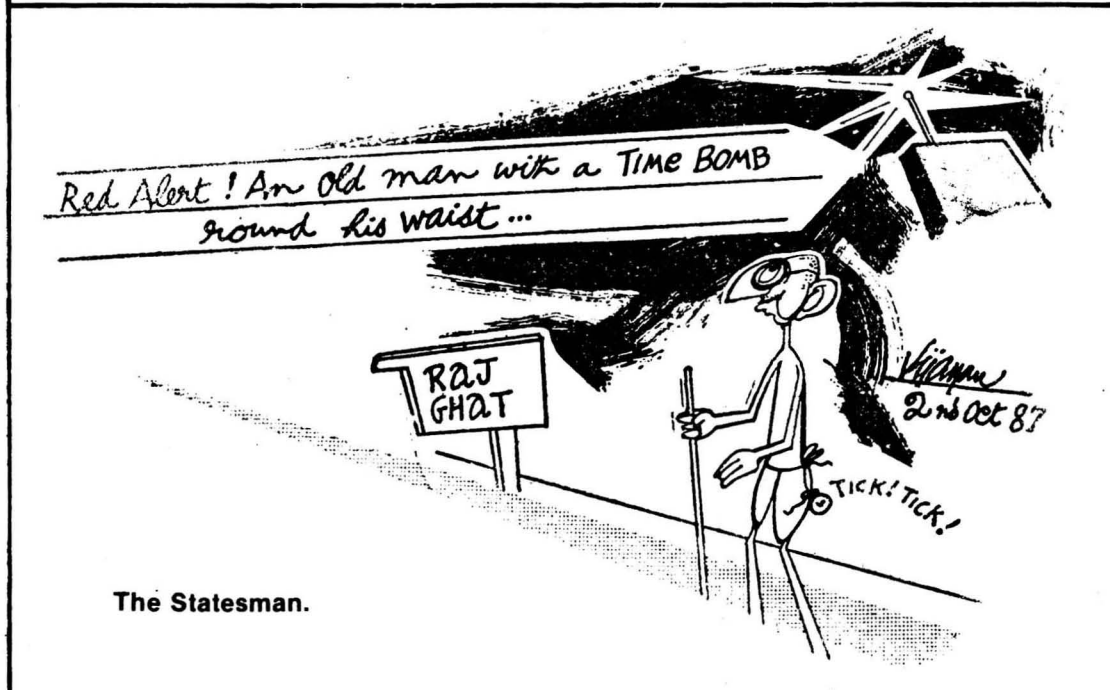
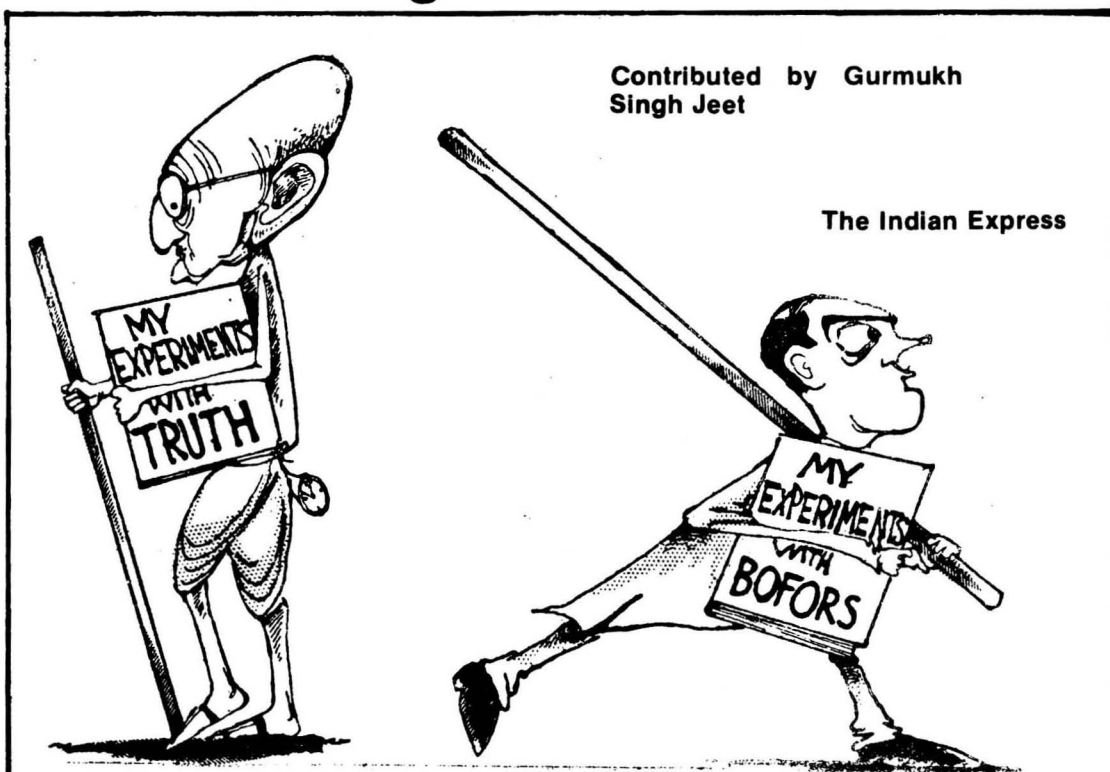
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The LTTE's Trincomalee commander, Pulendran, who committed suicide along with 12 other LTTE members by swallowing cyanide pills on Monday at the Palaly air base in Jaffna. The LTTE members were detained by the Sri Lankan Army on Saturday and committed suicide in protest against the decision to take them to Colombo.

Fortnight in Cartoons



Sound And Fury

In politics today, one would kill one's brother.

V.P. Singh, former defence minister.

We (the Opposition) will first plunge into the river and then learn how to swim and not the other way round.

Joyoti Basu, West Bengal Chief minister.

I do not accept the fact that there are Sikh terrorists.

Darshan Singh Ragi, acting chief of the Akal Takht.

It is now a matter of only four weeks for peace to return to Punjab.

Siddhartha Shankar Ray, Punjab Governor.

No religious preacher will approve of family planning. Not Hindus, not Muslims, not Christians, not Buddhists.

Jayendra Saraswati, Sankaracharya of Kanchi.

Our duty is to bring these rules to heel, to make them accountable to the people. And by our word, we will.

Editorial in the Indian Express, after the September 1 raids.

The best thing that Rajiv can do now is to step down.

Vijayalakshmi Pandit in The Times of India Sunday Review.

It was the biggest mistake ever committed to open the factory. Gun making is not a sage's job.

Dhirendra Brahmachari, quoted in The Telegraph.

It is not quite clear whether V.P. Singh wishes to work with in the Congress or wishes to take the clean part and join with other clean people outside. I've not been able to fathom this.

Ram Jethmalani in Sunday.

It is the Middle Ages which stare us in the eye rather than the 21st Century.

M.N. Buch in The Indian Express.

It seems that snakes and criminals have become the natural allies of the Congress (I).

V.P. Singh.

It is a well-known axiom that justice is blind but in India it is also lame which hobbles on crutches.

Mr. Nani A. Palkhivala.

When governments go berserk, it is not one particular thing that destroys them. It is the cumulative effect of many small things....This is a government that is not thinking.

Arun Shourie in Sunday.

Hiroshima is not merely a witness to history Hiroshima is an endless warning for the future of humankind. If Hiroshima is forgotten. The mistake will be repeated and human history will end.

Mr. Takeshi Araki, Mayor of Hiroshima.

I was born in free India and I will prefer death against dictatorship and army rule.

Dr. Farooq Abdullah.

Bofors, like Watergate, is walking into our lexicon.

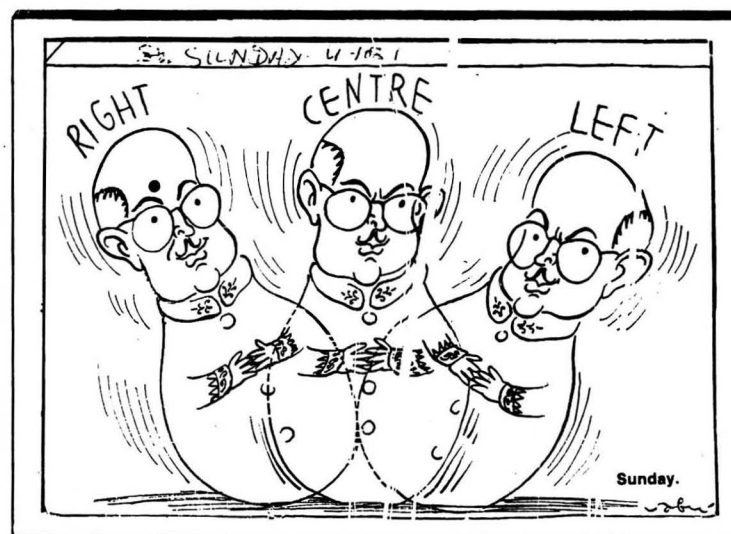
Mr. Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer.

The entire world has risen up against Islam.

Ayatollah Khomeini.

If I open my mouth, this Government will collapse in a day.

Dhirendra Brahmachari, in Khomeini.



NEWSHOUND



By Rap



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THE
FORUM
GAZETTE
**The Sarbat Khalsa
Tangle**

Before 1984, not many people had heard of what was the meaning of the phrase Sarbat Khalsa. The term had its origin in the 18th century when the Sikhs in the Punjab were a persecuted and hunted group of people. The state would reward anyone who caught a Sikh, dead or alive. That did not daunt the Sikhs however and they fought back so as to, first, recover their position and, then, drive the Afghans from the soil of the Punjab.

During those troubled days, as now, the scene of battle was Amritsar. The Golden Temple was demolished more than once within two decades. The last man to do so was Ahmed Shah Abdali. But then he was driven out and the temple was rebuilt. Since then, both literally and figuratively, control over Amritsar has meant control over Sikh affairs.

This was the historical context which in an extra-ordinary turn of events was revived in 1984. The last time the Sarbat Khalsa had been convened was in the early 19th century, a decade or so after Maharaja Ranjit Singh had consolidated his rule. The shrewd ruler that he was, he came to the conclusion that if he was to be successful as a monarch, one thing that he was to do was not to get into conflict with the whole might of the assembled Panth; that is what Sarbat Khalsa meant.

The institution had fallen into over a century and a half. After the Blue Star Operation, however, the Central government decided to revive it. As would be recalled, Baba Santa Singh was rescued from political oblivion and projected as the man who could rebuild the Akal Takht. Behind him were the resources of the Central government. The Akal Takht was built within a matter of months. In order to cover up what had happened earlier, the institution of the Sarbat Khalsa was revived, and it has now once again become a current political coin.

Since 1984 Sarbat Khalsa has been convened a couple of times. To start with, it was used by the Central government in support of its own objectives. Since then it is being used by the opponents of the Central government in pursuit of their objectives. When the SGPC refused to fall in line with the wishes of the militants, they organised the Sarbat Khalsa. Now that all the Jathedars appointed by the militants are not prepared to sign on the dotted line, the militants wanted to stage another mass show and replace the Jathedar of the Akal Takht. The reference, as should be evident, is to Ragi Darshan Singh.

In order to forestall this possibility, the government made it known that such a congregation would not be allowed. The Jathedars, however, have gone ahead and fixed it for the Diwali day. In other circumstances the government would have simply imposed curfew and prevented the Sarbat Khalsa from being held. Since the day coincides with the Diwali day, perhaps that is not easily feasible. The government has therefore done the next best thing from its own point of view and that is to arrest the three Sikh high priests.

On the face this looks like an attempt to curb militancy and to forbid—any accession of strength to secessionism. The situation however is not so simple. Their arrest is likely to lead to further alienation of the Sikhs from the political mainstream. This is not to condone secessionism. Some of these Jathedars have permitted themselves to be used (whether willingly or otherwise is not relevant here) by those who stand for Khalistan. From that point of view their arrest looks like an act of precaution and nothing more. But two questions arise.

One, how is it that the institution of Sarbat Khalsa which has become a menace today came to be resurrected after a lapse of more than a century and a half? It was not resurrected even in the early '20s when the Gurudwara Reform movement went on for 4-5 years. It was resurrected in the circumstances which arose after the Blue Star Operation. Having resurrected it once, it cannot be wished out of existence! the genie cannot be put back into the bottle. It is going to haunt the body politics of the country for years to come and the sole responsibility for that is that of the Central government. This is how the Centre manipulates the Sikh institutions so as to get advantage out of them. Little does it realise that advantage taken once becomes a precedent and this act of indiscretion comes home to roost.

Secondly secessionism or militancy are not going to be contained in the manner that they sought to be contained. The slogan of first dealing with terrorism and then attempting to find a political solution is not going to work. Perceptive students of the political scene have already seen the threat for themselves. Nor if terrorism is going to be contained in this manner. For every terrorist killed or arrested, another 2-3 are born and that is how it goes on and on.

Seen in terms of these two criteria; it is clear that the arrest of the high priests is yet another step in the prolongation of the political crisis which has gripped that state. Step by step the Punjab crisis is getting merged into the wider political crisis and likely enough it will not be solved till the basic political crisis of the country is also solved. Whether this is correct or not, the fact remains that the Punjab meanwhile is bleeding and will continue to bleed. But perhaps that is exactly what is intended and this is how it is.

The arrest of the high priests therefore should not be seen in isolation from the contours of the larger political crisis. If anyone likes to believe that by this act the Centre has taken a step towards containing secessionism, he is free to believe in that myth. The fact of the matter is that nothing is going to resolve the political crisis till the centre feels impelled to resolve it. The democratic forces in the country are too disunited and too feeble, so far, to force this issue, and that is why Punjab keeps on bleeding.

The Ghost of Khalistan

Amrik Singh

In early 1985 when Rajiv Gandhi went on his first American visit, he was asked a question about Khalistan at his press conference by a correspondent from Pakistan. In his reply he of course expressed himself against it but he also made a dig at the said correspondent. He said something to the effect that were the Khalistan plans to be properly implemented the capital of such a state would be Lahore.

In an unequal exchange between a political leader and a correspondent at a press conference, it is always the politician who has the last word. Nobody therefore can say how the Pakistani correspondent felt about it. But there were quite a number of people who felt that the whole thing had not been in good taste.

Something of this kind has happened again in the course of Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Vancouver. He poo-pooed the idea of Khalistan and said that India was totally opposed to it. But he also went on to say according to the Reuters, that since some of the Sikhs in Canada were all that keen on it, let them have it in Canada if they wanted or something to that effect.

One does not know how the Canadian newspapers and mediamen reacted to this statement. It is clear, however, that the statement was uncalled for. This should be clear from the stand in the next press conference in which he tried to save the position. Rajiv Gandhi is entitled to oppose Khalistan as something which India would not entertain and so on. But was it necessary to make the reference to Canada? Once again, if one may be forgiven for saying so, it is a mark of immaturity of which his mother, for instance was never guilty.

In a more serious vein, one might raise the question; who has asked for Khalistan? Was it implied even by the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of which one heard so much in the last general election? Has it been demanded by the Akali Dal? Now that the Akali Dal is divided into two groups, has it been demanded even by the second group? The only one who seemed to talk about Khalistan before the Blue Star Operation was Dr. Jagjit Singh Chauhan. As anyone who knows the UK scene knows, he was almost an isolated figure in that country. He could not get together even two dozen people in order to support him. The only time he had any measure of support was for a few months following the Blue Star Operation. He continued to be in the news even during the days of Mrs. Indira Gandhi's assassination. He made one or two controversial statements which were however very prominently featured and commented upon by a number of other people. Since then the gentleman has more or less declined into obscurity once again and little

is heard of him today.

It must not go unnoticed however that whenever he referred to Khalistan during the pre Blue Star days, it was to fortify some political move of the then Prime Minister. In plain words his pronouncements were so timed as to more or less strengthen the demand for Khalistan which was being given currency by certain people. Indeed there are people who believe that there was some kind of an invisible link between the propaganda of the ruling party in India at that time and his demand for Khalistan.

To put it more bluntly there was nor has been a genuine or widely shared demand for Khalistan at any stage. A few odd people had always talked of it right from 1947 but they had always been described as belonging to the lunatic fringe. Nobody took them seriously. The ruling party however so projected things that Bhindranwale and his associates came to be looked upon as the protagonists of Khalistan. His own position was ambiguous in the matter. He never asked for it but did not close his options either. Right till the Blue Star Operation therefore a kind of unstated feeling was disseminated wherein the Sikhs were seen to be asking for Khalistan. This coupled with the incidents of lawlessness and violence and selective killing of Hindus created a kind of feeling in which the Sikhs were successfully equated with Khalistan.

And yet this was far from the truth on the ground. All that happened was that after the Operation Blue Star a much higher percentage of people started looking upon Khalistan as a way of escape from the kind of persecution and harassment to which they were subjected. And yet it is on record that in less than a year after the Blue Star Sant Longowal who to be sure, had not been categorically against Khalistan till then but had never been for it either, came out openly in defence of the unity and integrity of the country. It was on that basis that the ground was laid for an accord between him and the Prime Minister. All the propaganda which had paid such rich dividends to the ruling party in the eighth general

election was quietly laid aside and an accord was signed.

One should have thought that after that accord the ghost of Khalistan had been finally buried. But that did not happen. In April 1986 the Panthic Committee declared Khalistan. This in turn led to the police entry into the Golden Temple and a number of other subsequent developments. It should not be necessary to recount each one of them except to call attention to the fact that while the Panthic Committee has been certainly talking of Khalistan and has tried to drum up some support for it, support has been conspicuously denied to this demand. Anyone with an open mind can see for that himself. Some of the terrorists activity which is taking place now is presumed to be under the guidance and inspiration of the Panthic Committee. Nevertheless it is nobody's contention that Khalistan is anything like a serious item of discussion. Even the recently announced body has more people from outside India on it than from within the country. In that sense the foreign inspiration is clear and unmistakable.

Why then should Rajiv Gandhi discuss Khalistan in a manner as if it was an item on the agenda? And more than that why should he go beyond that and refer to the Canadian soil as being the place where Khalistan may be established. One expects both greater political maturity on the part of the Prime Minister and more important than that, a greater sense of truthfulness. When the issue is no longer alive, to treat it as a live issue is not only to stretch the point, it is to play politics of a shabby kind which does not do credit to the Prime Minister of a country like India and which is totally inconsistent with the image that he has been trying to project of late. Sad to say, it appears that he image does not correspond to the reality. The reality is that he still wants to persist with the politics of maligning a whole community and misrepresenting its overall position. In a sense this is adding insult to the injury. To say today that Khalistan is a meaningful threat is totally unfounded but, worse than that, an instance of unabashed partisan politicking.

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Sri Lanka and India

Continued from page 1

But from the word go, the LTTE was difficult. Even before the ink on the accord had dried, it proclaimed its rejection of the accord and its adherence to the goal of a separate Tamil Eelam. What is more its leaders went out of their way to say that any further loss of Tamil lives would be New Delhi's fault since New Delhi was not only a party to the agreement but also the guarantor of Tamil security.

their barracks while the militants were to surrender their weapons so that the political arrangements get out in it could be followed up.

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Nor was the LTTE any more cooperative when it came to surrendering its weaponry. It is clear now that its leaders told nothing but lies. Finally this lead to fighting between LTTE militants and IPKF. According to reports so far 79 Indian soldiers have been killed in "peacekeeping" operations while 380 LTTE men have died, Sri Lanka radio reported that four captured Indian soldiers had been killed by the LTTE.

According to LTTE chief Mr. V. Prabhakaran "It is a paradox of great tragedy that the IPKF which came to our homeland to ensure protection peace and harmony are engaged in a total war, committing inhuman atrocities against our people."

He also has said that Sri Lankan President J. R. Jayewardene has cleverly succeeded in creating a confrontation between India and his organisation.

In identical letters to Chief Minister M.G. Ramachandran, DMK President M. Karunanidhi and other political leaders in Tamil Nadu, Mr Prabhakaran said: "We are not insane to fight against India, which has one of the strongest armies in the world".

He said the LTTE was fighting in self-defence as the Indian Army was "surrounding us from all sides".

Mr Prabhakaran appealed to all political parties in India, particularly in Tamil Nadu, to launch a mass movement in support of the Sri Lankan Tamils.

Political Coup

In India one view is that one outcome of the recent reprisal killings by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is that it has lost sympathy in Tamil Nadu, where it had found shelter, they note.

The president of the Tamil Nadu Congress committee, Mr. M. Palaniyandi, says the state has no sympathy for the LTTE now. The people here do not

approve of violence and killing. Mr Palaniyandi said the IPKF had adopted a conciliatory attitude and was tolerant even when Indian soldiers were shot. But the reprisal killings were too much for it. The IPKF should deal firmly not only with the Tamil militants but also with the Sinhala terrorists, he said.

On the other hand it seems that the LTTE had staged a political coup in Tamil Nadu by winning over both the ruling AIADMK and the Opposition DMK to its side. The rival Kazhagams had never before been found championing the same cause.

A six-hour hartal was called in Tamil Nadu by various political parties to convey the peoples anguish over the "killings" of Tamils in Jaffna by the IPKF. The ruling AIADMK decided to join the hartal. An "all party" meeting decided on the measure as the Government of India did not heed its 24-hour ultimatum to stop the fighting in Jaffna. The Dravida Kazhagam and the Tamil Nadu Kamaraj Congress are the sponsors of the hartal.

Mr. M. G. Ramachandran, from his holiday resort in Baltimore USA, ordered his partymene to join hartal called by the Dravidar Kazhagam and sundry parties in the State.

Appealing to Mr Gandhi to order immediate cessation of hostilities by the IPKF Mr. Ramachandran said, "the AIADMK wants to prevent killing of Tamils and destruction of their property. Instead of fixing responsibility for whatever happened in the last seven days and prolonging the controversy, my party wants to create a proper atmosphere for resumption of talks between the IPKF and the LTTE."

LTTE strategy

Through its world-wide network the LTTE also managed to deliver a copy of its supreme. Mr Velupillai Pirabhakaran's letter to Mr Rajiv Gandhi, suing for peace in Vencouver.

The Defence Minister Mr. K.C. Pant, who was in Pondicherry attending a function at the Central University there, was called from the venue to the Raj Bhavan for an urgent telephonic message from the Prime Minister.

The IPKF, which had been saying that Jaffna would fall "withing the next 48 hours" for the past seven days, was understood to have been asked to slow down following a series

of high-level political consultations between Madras. New Delhi, Vancouver and Jaffna, set in motion by Mr Sadasivan Krishnakumar, alias Kittu, former Jaffna commander of the LTTE by calling on the Tamil Nadu Food Minister Mr S. Ramachandran, who had been assisting the Chief Minister. Mr M.G. Ramachandran, on the Sri Lanka issue.

A spokesman of the LTTE, who did not want his name to be disclosed, said the Indian soldiers, who had never seen a real war since 1971, when many of the Tamil Tigers had not even been born, were no match to the battle-trained, highly-motivated LTTE cadres. "Even if we are defeated due to the superior fire power of the Indian Army. We will revert to guerrilla war and our struggle for Eelam will go on indefinitely," he said.

If India resolved the basic problems of the Tamils. Such as the devolution package and land colonialization, the LTTE was prepared to resume negotiations and accept a political solution to the ethnic problem.

Mr P. K. Loganathan, leader of the AIADMK group in the

Pondicherry Legislativ Assembly, submitted a memorandum to Mr Pant demanding calling off of all military operations by the IPKF in Sri Lanka.

The Pondicherry Manila Makkal Munnant president and former Chief Minister, Mr. S. Ramaswami, also submitted a memorandum to Mr. Pant requesting immediate cease-fire in Sri Lanka.

About 300 Janata Party volunteers, led by Mr. V. Pethamperumal MLA, were arrested in Pondicherry for trying to stage a black flag demonstration against Mr. Pant.

Meanwhile, the LTTE headd by the police. Mr V. Gopalasamy, DMK MP, who went there to see "kittu" was arrested by the police He was later released.

A report from Madras says that Mr V. Gopalasamy, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam member of parliament was rearrested outside the residence of LTTE leader, Mr Kittu, in Madras.

The police said Mr Gopalasamy was arrested under Section 353 of the IPC

According to political observers, Mr Premadasa's open criticism of the accord signed by the Sri Lankan President, Mr Junius Jayewardene, and the Prime Minister, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, was an indication of the factionalism and dissent in the country's administration.

the LTTE had staged a political coup in Tamil Nadu by winning over both the ruling AIADMK and the Opposition DMK to its side. The rival Kazhagams had never before been found championing the same cause.

(assault or criminal force to deter public servant discharging his duty).

According to the police, Mr Gopalasamy was raising slogans against the Central and state government on their handling of the Sri Lanka Tamils issue outside Mr Kittu's house and when questioned he manhandled a police officer and policemen.

Mr Gopalasamy was produced before a magistrate who remanded him to 15 days custody.

Outburst at U.N.

In another development the Sri Lankan Prime Minister, Mr. R. Premadasa while addressing the United Nations General Assembly on 12 october alleged that "terrorism sponsored from across the shores" was ravaging his country.

According to political observers Mr Premadasa's open criticism of the accord signed by the Sri Lankan President, Mr Junius Jayewardene, and the Prime Minister, Mr Rajiv Gandhi, was an indication of the factionalism and dissent in the country's administration.

In reply to Mr Premadasa's statement, Mr K.S. Rao, MP, said such "innuendoes" were "unacceptable" at a time when the Sri Lanka-India accord was "undergoing a period of stress." He said the Indian peacekeeping force was "engaged in implementing the accord at a considerable cost."

In a plea to the UN to act quickly in Sri Lanka, Mr Premadasa said, "In the face of these dastardly, unjust and barbarian acts can an august assembly of this stature turn a blind eye and a deaf ear?"

Mr Premadasa's outburst seemed to surprise many

S.G.P.C.

Continued from page 1

events. Each of the opposing factions of the Akalis have 'elected' executive committee suitable to its purposes. The Tohra faction has elected G.S. Tohra the reigning president. The Barnala group has declared for Harcharan Singh Hudiara, a veteran of the fifties agitation for the Punjabi suba.

Government Intervention

The act which regulates these elections provides for a kind of recognition by the union government in the form of a notification of the results of the SGPC elections.

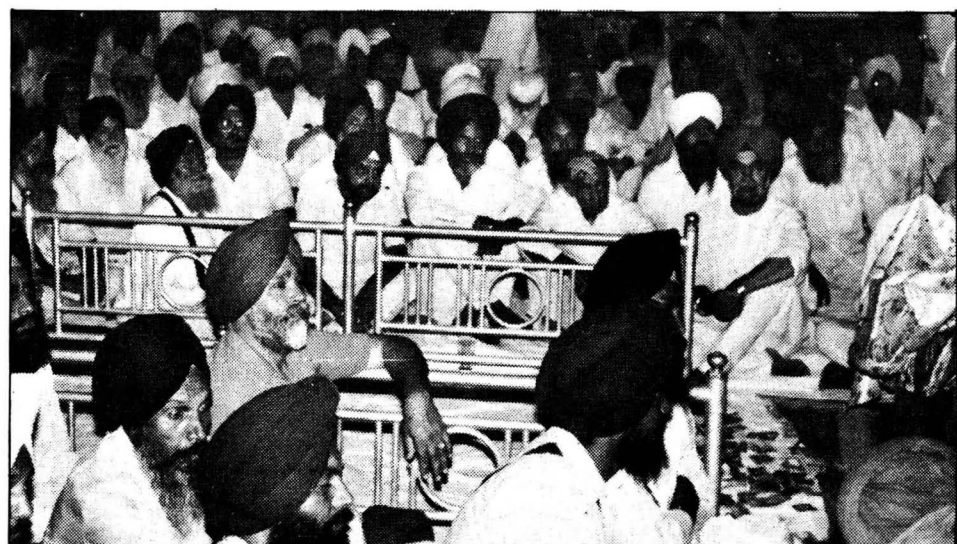
The Akali factions, each claiming the support of sixty-five plus members of the general body of 132 members have cleared the ground for full-scale intervention by the central government whom they are so fond of cursing, accusing and denigrating.

The union government may now prolong the mess indefinitely. Or it may choose according to its own convenience. So far so good. The dove cots will flutter wildly if the union government fall to the temptation of the third alternative!

The third alternative is to

assume some kind of constructive responsibility of the management of the Sikh gurdwaras by its own officers in a situation where the lawful managers of the gurdwaras i.e. SGPC goes into a state of comma because of its internal division and conflict.

With this kind of eventuality materialising in Punajb the Akalis as a movement will be thrown back into the early 1920 when they had to struggle for long to wrest democratic management of the Sikh gurdwaras by the elected representatives of the community.



Delhi's Dangerous Drivers

Mohinder Singh

And what about all those drivers whose educational cum cultural level seems more tuned to countryside than sophisticated city driving? And some others who seem to be seeking sadistic satisfaction in harrying the lower road species? No wonder, buses are a party to nearly half of the major accidents when their numbers are hardly one per cent of the city's million-strong motorised fleet.

Driving, as a hobby is known. Mine is driver-watching. Possibly there isn't a better place to watch human character than at a busy road junction when traffic lights have failed (from power cuts or otherwise) and a policeman is yet to materialise. Or for that matter, any typical Delhi intersection with lights functioning and a cop in sight. Chauffeurs of seemingly important functionaries wheeling their embellished Ambassadors ahead; their masters have pressing engagements. Buses, packed as if with melacrowds, shrieking their way through, often in wrong lanes. Autorickshaws have caught up and are phutting themselves in front. And right in front almost in the way to cross-traffic a line of helmeted motorcyclists on their panting machines; poised to lift their right hip in unison and charge like the 'charge of the Light Brigade'.

The Buses

Bus driver of DTC or those contracted! One gets an impression the majority drive in a disconcertingly light-hearted manner, as if oblivious of the size and contents of their charge. Perhaps the vehicle which they drive a truck chassis with a passenger compartment mounted instead is partly to blame. Obviously overpowered for the purpose; it's designed to haul more than ten tons of freight while even a hundred average Indians won't weight six tons. Someday when many more and better buses are in demand, the manufacturers would have to introduce an integrated passenger coach, and for city plying a low-slung one at that to facilitate user entry and exit. Fitted with power-steering, power brakes almost a standard norm elsewhere to lighten driver fatigue and strain. No doubt a far cry from the present-day rattling contraptions with mission tail and signal lights if nothing worse in mechanical defects. The hired private buses which are actually mufassil buses, are the least suited to handle metropolitan commuter rush.

And what about the accident-prone chronic indiscipline of stopping or slowing without a hint or warning at places where they shouldn't? (what to say of not stopping where they should.) It's immaterial whether it's done to favour the 'staff' or in the spirit of a good Samaritan;

the traffic hazards are the same. Well, the habit here has got so deeply ingrained, nothing less than large-scale summary chastisement of the defaulting crews would make a dent. Automatic closing of bus doors when in motion would have helped put that's just inconceivable in our conditions; even railways haven't managed it yet.

And what about all those drivers whose educational cum cultural level seems more tuned city driving? And some others who seem to be seeking sadistic satisfaction in harrying the lower road species? No wonder, buses are a party to nearly half of the major accidents when their numbers are hardly one per cent of the city's million-strong motorised fleet.

Aggressive Driving

Truck drivers! The heavily loaded long-distance truck driver is apt to show skill and restraint he wouldn't survive otherwise. Of course it's a different matter if his 'cleaner' happens to be at the wheel. Light city trucks and vans pose a greater danger. Their drivers always seem to be in a desperate hurry delivering cartons or crates. Presumably a little indifferent to an additional scrape to bodies already battered with loadings and unloadings.

Taxi drivers! Here the most aggressive ones are often those of DLY Hindustans. They overtake threateningly, park brazenly and literally cut corners. The Mercedes and Toyotas are driven rather carefully (the hand-picked drivers in roadworthy airconditioned units are well aware of the costs of a bang). The decrepit black-and-yellow cabs aren't behind anybody in breaking rules but evidently look too tired to wreak proportionate harm.

Autorickshaw drivers and mind you, their tribe will increase. His machine is perhaps his worst enemy. Underpowered (a single cylinder two-stroke scooter engine of 145cc in popular Bajaj model, pulling loads several times that of a scooter). A most unimaginative, uncomfortable driver seat of a thinly-covered plank innocent of springs of sides, with a bar sticking at the driver's spine (little to envy a fellow bent thereon for twelve hours a day, more so if he has developed a paunch). Poor visibility particularly of the rear

and windscreen wipers only in name. The tedious hand-kick instead of self-starting; and almost inoperative tail and signal lights. With autorickshaws fast figuring as our 'taxis', someone has to give far more attention and thought to their safety and design (it's like our buffalo, the advanced world won't do much research on it) At least an early change over to full bright yellow or orange red in place of half-black.

The drivers compound its sins by squeezing themselves in front at every traffic light, quite unmindful that their poor acceleration will slow down the junction clearance. And they are often seen to swerve suddenly at best putting belatedly a half hand especially when circulating empty in anxious search of custom. Most traffic authorities have yet to sort out traffic regulations for this hybrid creature neither undergoing the discipline of a four-wheeler nor possessing the flexibility of a two-wheeler.

Need less Risks

Possibly, as a category, owner-drivers of cars and two-wheelers come out less menacing. A surprise area where amateurs are seen scoring over the professionals, largely because our professionals do so badly. Yet, everyday these amateurs are making too many mistakes, taking too many needless risks. And the chances of their getting away with it unscathed are steadily narrowing. The aberrations can well be conveniently grouped under two broad heads. The thoughtless or erroneously conceived notions of city driving; and the intentional, aggressive acts of upmanship, evidently at the expense or to the annoyance of fellow road users.

Intersection clearance is not helped by everyone bunching in front or the naughty one positioning themselves in improper lanes, but it's also not helped if you through thoughtlessness or lack of skill fail to accelerate fast. Speed here is at a premium, and what to say of Marutis, even our older models can be pushed to accelerate. Your concern isn't limited to yourself beating the light but to all those others queued up behind you.

Speeding in itself is not a curse, it's speeding in wrong places such as residential areas, or inconsiderately such as against walking women and children, old and infirm, handicapped or even scooters carrying children. In fact, on long clear stretches everyone has to speed up (there isn't any intrinsic merit in going slow). And if you can't, better stay clear of the fast lane. Bulk of the accidents take place when someone is overtaking 'a moving roadblock'.

There is nothing more thoughtless than allowing one's lights particularly tail and signal lights to remain out of order (and sadly more than half of Delhi's cars suffer this plight).



The same applies to two-wheelers where again every manufacturer should be required by law to fit in signal lights. Admittedly, most current fittings are of poor quality and their replacements often spurious. Yet this added expense and trouble may well be accepted in the spirit of an extra levy. And no less worse is the failure to make habitual use of signal lights (a hand put out is no longer acceptable, besides it could get hurt). And mind you, the hands are primarily meant to remain at 10 and 2 o'clock positions at the wheel, with a minimum of liftings or gesticulations.

Lane Driving

Every move of yours turning, lane-changing, braking must get signalled. That way in city driving, nearly half the time one is looking through the rear-view mirror. Ideally, almost as much care is taken to alert those coming behind as if you were driving for them. You can't confuse someone following by keeping partly in one lane and partly in the other. Those road

lines are important; they cost a lot of money.

Drivers forgetting to dip headlights. Maruti drivers are perhaps unaware how dazzling their headlights could be. This possibly is one of the most unpardonable of driving lapses, as it betokens a sheer lack of consideration for others.

The intentionally aggressive driving! One concedes, a driver with skill, confidence and practice, and with intimate knowledge of his city's roads and traffic patterns can cut some travel time, yet he can't jump queues at traffic lights, bully his way round the roundabouts, or harass other by overhonking or flashing lights. He can't work out his upmanship (or manhood ego) by ignoring red lights, circumventing them by turning left and then right, or even flouting one-way rules. He isn't running through the gauntlet of enemy lines. Becomes at least an irritant if not a danger.

Everyone on road is seeking to go somewhere. How can certain individuals allot to their own errands an overriding priority?

Speeding in itself is not a curse, it's speeding in wrong places such as residential areas, or inconsiderately such as against walking women and children, old and infirm, handicapped or even scooters carrying children. In fact, on long clear stretches everyone has to speed up (there isn't any intrinsic merit in going slow). And if you can't, better stay clear of the fast lane. Bulk of the accidents take place when someone is overtaking 'a moving roadblock'.

Letters

Forum Gazette Approach

The Forum Gazette has filled the gap long over due to represent a view point in the context of the current Indian situation. Apart from the Sikhs (a minority community), the need to rationalise political and social situation in a country with many sub-cultures as India must be realised sooner than later. Sikhs as a minority Community has played very significant role in the political, economic and social evolution of the country before and after independence. Every community should realise the need for honourable co-existence with others. Communal amity, good will and understanding among all sections of Indian Society seems to be the basic approach of the paper.

In the context of the Punjab Problem it has balancing and rational views. The present situations may not last very long, but the need for such approach on the part of the press in India shall continue.

I hope that the paper will adhere to its policy. Sooner or later the voice of reason shall be heard. Its introduction in school and libraries shall be useful in providing balanced view point for the benefit of youth. There is need for the development of intellectual and intelligent approach in the minds of younger generation and people who have the ability to influence thinking at all levels.

L. S. BOPARAI
Principal
G.H.P.S. India Gate

Coping with 1980's

Critical Issues Confronting Sikhism

The Gurmat Prachar Trust New Delhi organised the Third Raghbir Singh Bir Memorial lecture on 3 October, 1987 at New Delhi. S. Saran Singh I.A.S (Rtd.) of Calcutta delivered the lecture. Given below is the text of his speech which is quite stimulating in present times.

We are living through tumultuous times: Time of communal conflict and social unrest, times of a head-on collision of religion with political power, times of economic advances and moral retreat, times of instantaneous communications and loss of credibility, times of alternating hope and despair. Forty years after gaining independence, at the cost of vivisection of the subcontinent, we seem to be wandering in an Augean wilderness.

In order to emerge from the darkness of despair into the sunshine of a happy and united people within a happy and united India, it is imperative that we make a conscious and determined effort to tear asunder the veil of myth that obscures the reality concerning our rights and duties as Sikhs in India and moral and spiritual values that the Ten Gurus perfect through long years as response to grim and ceaseless challenges. Our test today must consist of not only the ability to endure our destiny but to shape it for the future.

The Indian Constitution guarantees religious freedom. How is it that most minority faiths have come under pressure to compromise their religious identity as the price for joining the mainstream of Indianhood? Why is the definition of patriotism being altered to conform to the strait-jacket of the Brahminical code that the State seems to have ostensibly adopted? Complex manoeuvres of powers that be seem to threaten not only the Sikh way of life but the very basis of a pluralistic society in a democratic polity. The essence of modern totalitarianism is the insistence on a single standard of virtue and a uniform code patterned on the traditional symbology of the majority.

Need for Better Understanding

There is a rather distressing ignorance among the mass of Indian people about Sikh beliefs and practices. Text books are perhaps written on the assumption that since Sikhs

constitute a bare two per cent of population, just that much information about their religion and history might suffice. The media grudge even that. If anything, they have, in recent times, spread a disproportionate degree of misinformation about the Sikh ethos. It is unfortunate that the electronic media—radio and television—are not free and fair, being a State monopoly, while the print media are, by and large, owned and controlled by a wealthy but orthodox section of the majority community. Consequently, what we read in newspapers—whether English or the languages—has a distinctive slant. All norms of objective reporting appear to have been abandoned. The editor of a respected national daily is never tired of churning out anti-Sikh tirades. Another learned editor insists that Sikhs are only a sect of Hinduism dismissing our aspirations as illusory if not mischievous and anti-national. Walls of bias and bigotry have effectively shut out any open minded dialogue to promote understanding of an essentially simple and uncomplicated faith struggling to assert its distinctive identity.

Sikhism quintessentially is a viable, practical, moral discipline requiring its adherents to adore and remember God, earn an honest living and share it with those in need: The miracle wrought by Gurus consists in how they achieved celestial heights of spiritual purity in a strife-torn country while inspiring their followers to make every kind of sacrifice for a life a freedom and righteousness for all humanity.

At the same time Sikhism is not just an exercise in personal piety nor another Olympic text of physical endurance, demanding as it is in the observance of the moral code. An important component—perhaps the *sine-qua-non*—of the Sikh way of life is social activism and congregational participation embodied in the concepts of *Sangat* and *Pangat*.

In any discussion of the questions of morality and ethics, different perspectives have been developed about how a person may live a good life. One response is discipline, i.e. living the moral life by being obedient to a set of rules or laws of ethics. We could superficially term it legalism in religion, which can degenerate into fundamentalism and often become sterile as a spiritual exercise. Such shibboleths have been roundly and repeatedly condemned by Guru Nanak in *Asa-di-var*. In the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib, the key to a moral and spiritual life consists in the twin principle:

"Sarab Dharma meh shreshtha Dharam, Hari ko Naam Jap Nirmal Karam."

This ethical principle emphasizes the holiness of life; body is the temple of God, every human being has the right and duty to strive for self-realisation. It is towards achieving this all-important goal that the Gurus prescribe a specific code of conduct—a code that demands protection, not penance, of the body, including its integral part the *Kesh*, abstinence from tobacco and deleterious drugs and intoxicants, early rising and austerity. *Pahul* or *Amrit*, is meant as the climactic benediction to the observance of the aforesaid code of ethics. It is the spur to the life of loyalty to the basic principle, a bond of love with fellow Sikhs as well as with humanity at large. In this relationship all divisions and distinctions of caste, colour, status or station dissolve.

In today's age, while the educated people tend to seek answers to their inner most questions through science and technology, the unlettered masses cling to superstition and look for supernatural intervention for all their woes. The argument for secularism in modern age does not admit of transcendentalism. Traditional ways of thinking and speaking about God seem obsolete and meaningless. Most people live their lives as if God did not exist. We think of God only when we are in dire distress or when there are questions we cannot answer. Otherwise, for the so called modernist, God has become irrelevant.

But this is contrary to the teachings of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh who ignited the Divine spirit in every disciple: "Jagat Jyot jape his-basur....." The Gurus affirmed that we are capable of realising and, experiencing God however subtle and beyond comprehension. He may be. The imperatives of a truthful and virtuous life are inseparable from the Divine power. For devotees He is not impersonal.

The world is afire in sin, unable to accomplish its own salvation, only Divine Grace can grant salvation. Guru's intervention is the last desperate instrumentality for showing the way. Thus Guru-vani is not in conflict with scientific thought or, for that matter, with other religions. In fact, if the age of the Gurus had any scientific thought and temper it is amply reflected in the holy scriptures, be it with reference to the cosmos, the planet earth, the material world, the origin of species, biology, physics or chemistry. The ever present scientific and logical thought in Guru-vani persuaded the late S. Raghbir Singh Bir to invent the hybrid term "Atam-Science" as the title of his renowned and widely read monthly journal. To be sure Sikhism does not have to defend itself against the

expanding realm of science. On the other hand, Guru-vani says there are vast and immense spaces of the mind and spirit which remain a mystery and it will be many millenia before science can explore every recess of the human spirit.

None the less the conflict is not so much between science and "secularism" of the Indian variety and the religious practices, in short the religion that divides and breeds hatred and antagonism. The entire Guru Granth Sahib is a repudiation of this false religion:

Fanaticism is merely another face of this falsity. It is contagious. It tends to evoke similar response from the adversary. Our experience in India, both pre-partition and post-partition, brings home to us the fact that nothing is more deadly than the frictions generated by religious passion. Pascal said it more than three centuries ago: "Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction." Until now Sikhism has been singularly free from this brand of religious fanaticism.

The twin dangers that Sikhism faces today are of ultraliberalism, on the one hand, which seeks to discard the basic discipline, and the fundamentalism which takes us into a blind alley and consequential isolationism, on the other. The former needs no encouragement to turn his back upon *rehat-maryada*, seeing these as reflective of medieval times, rather than the Divinely inspired, timeless message of the great Masters who tested the ingredients in the crucible of life. The Gurus laid down a code that was at once realistic and rewarding as the guidepost for day to day living and carving out a character and spirit as close to the Divine spirit as flesh and blood could admit of.

Fundamentalism, is founded on the concept that the *rehat-maryada* must be interpreted literally and placed on an absolute plane. In some measure, fundamentalism is the by-product of the events and trends of the last two decades.

Since that period Sikhism has exhibited its share or radical and startling features. It both reflected and contributed to the activism and turmoil of the period. The media widely publicized the theological phenomenon but tendentially represented it as fundamentalism. More deplorable was the onslaught against the established Sikh

tradition of *Amrit Prachar*. Official media gave it a sinister aspect asking the people to beware of the Amritdhari Sikh, as if he were some kind of a dangerous creature pervasively determined to subvert the country! To impute motives of subversion and extremism was calculated to win the majority community and cause confusion among Sikh ranks besides breeding disaffection between Sikhs and other classes in India. There is yet no evidence to indicate that the said kind of misinformation has been discontinued, or that the media have relented or tried to understand the true significance of *Amrit Prachar* and its spiritual importance. Nor have the multifarious Sikh organisations made any attempt to bring home to the intelligentsia what initiation into the Khalsa brotherhood really implies. It is probably not too late to try and disabuse the mind of all men of good will as to the true nature of Sikh baptism.

The events of 1984 have doubtless left an indelible scar on the Sikh psyche. The effect on our moral and religious fibre is distinguishable largely by the fact of geography, whether we live within boundaries of Punjab or beyond. The degree of democratic freedom available to us for practising the basic tenets varies, so does our response to the challenge of identity. Whereas thousands of apostates in western countries have returned to the purity of classical Sikhism as Keshdhari and Amritdhari Sikhs, here in India, and particularly in Delhi, the confusion and fear psychosis seem to have gripped growing numbers of those rushing into apostasy and wilfully, if foolishly, discarding the symbols in an illusory quest for personal safety.

In towns as far apart as Delhi and Dhanbad, paranoid parents have led their school-age children to barber shops like sacrificial lambs to the slaughter house. In Bangalore, a teenager returned home with his hair cropped to confront his shocked mother with the explanation that he could not live in constant dread of retaliatory violence. Taxi drivers in India's metropolises have taken shelter behind turbanless anonymity. This paranoia is not confined to the male of the species. Instances of Sikh girls turning their back on the traditional cultural

None the less the conflict is not so much between science and "secularism" of the Indian variety and the religious practices, in short the religion that divides and breeds hatred and antagonism. The entire Guru Granth Sahib is a repudiation of this false religion:

Politics of violence and revenge has spelt suicidal ruination. Its vicious circle must be broken. Let us make unity, amity and goodwill the cornerstones of our relationship with other communities in the true spirit of *Manas Ki Jat Sabhe the Pahachanve*. Let us stand firm in our resolve to achieve our goals for these goals intersect with practically every aspect of Punjab's progress and the future of the Sikhs. Let us not fear to negotiate. Let us not hold our heritage so cheap as to barter it away for an illusory guarantee of safety without honour in the short run. Let us make India safe for our children and our children's children—as Sikhs.

affinity and seeking matrimonial alliance with a families whose culture is light years away are becoming common.

These ominous trends seem to stem from a multipronged assault by the powers that be to destroy the external Sikh identity. The strategy is two fold: To strike fear in the heart of the younger generation of fledgling Sikhs by suggesting that the terror and brutality of November 1984 could be re-enacted. Secondly, to project the turbaned Sikh and a prototype terrorist by means of a sustained manipulation of news that might shame the younger generation, in urban centres outside Punjab into abandoning the visible symbols of Sikhism. In the absence of a concerted and determined campaign by Sikh organisations to counteract this strategy, the damage to the culture entity of Sikhs goes on unabated.

It is necessary to impress upon the Sikhs outside Punjab that our vitality, creativity and vigour are derived from our rooted faith in the Guru's chosen path. Only the most gullible would believe that there is safety in the anonymity of the mass. It is like feeding the crocodile in the hope that he will eat you last, for eat you he will. The example of Buddhism is with us, of how they were brought to the brink of extinction not withstanding Gautam's noble message of love and compassion. How did we arrive at such a sorry state of affairs?

Collision Course

The mid 1960's in Punjab were, in some ways, a time of spectacular economic progress, a trail blazing in agriculture, marking the advent of Green Revolution. It was also the time of boom in emigration to the West turning into an outward bound tidal wave which seemed to peak when the Green Revolution reached its plateau. This was the time of supreme confidence on the economic plane and a sense of accomplishment. Unprecedented number of youth threshold of colleges to gain admission, while many more queued up for passports to go abroad to join kinsmen.

It was only in 1982 when Centre's indifference to the rising Sikhs aspiration earlier embodied in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution provoked the more radicals to issue a threat that the Ninth Asian Games in Delhi in the autumn of that year will be disrupted, that brought up an astonishing over

reaction, not so much in Delhi, the venue of the Games, but in neighbouring Haryana. Barricades were raised on the National Highway connecting Punjab with the capital and the hamhanded police heckled, harassed and humiliated every turbaned traveller during several weeks preceding the Olympic extravaganza. The roughing up of Sikhs cast a pall of deep apprehension and resentment. The deployment of para military forces in Punjab dramatically escalated the tension and sense of discrimination. The media's unbridled publicity to Sant Bhindrawale's utterances proved a heady mixture focussing the floodlights on the Taksal that had hitherto been only a seminary of Sikh theology engaged in classical scriptural studies, covering themes of purity of moral and physical actions. The surge of popular piety that came in the wake of Bhindrawale's discourses was largely a socio-cultural phenomenon. Sadly, this was, blown out by a curious and over-zealous press, through most of 1983, as fundamentalism in which the main articles of faith were more political than religious.

The savage violence against Sikhs in Delhi and entire North India in the wake of the tragic assassination of Mrs. Gandhi on October 31, 1984 left an impact of cataclysmic proportions on their psyche. The year was a time of national trauma marking the point of no return for an alienated community. To cite only one example: no one has really explained to me how, even on the most favourable assumptions about Operation Bluestar, the gallantry awards could be justified.

In his book "Why Men Rebel", the American sociologist T. Robert Gurr has argued that political violence is the consequence of a significant gap developing between the expectations of a given group and the willingness of authority to concede them. This sense of aspirational deprivation and cumulative frustration, in case of Punjab, eventually brought to the surface the phenomena of terrorism, initially manifest in the violence of reprisals and subsequently degenerating into indiscriminate murders. A fringe of the youth gradually started protesting repression by the security forces and became progressively violent.

There is a virtual breakdown in public confidence. While the media report incidents of terrorism with elaborate fanfare, the savage deaths due

to the backlash are relegated to obscure back-pages. In this chaos, criminals, saboteurs and enemy agents have been freely indulging in acts of brutality and mayhem, killing the unwary and the innocent with sickening regularity.

To complicate matters, the working of certain Commissions pursuant to the Gandhi-Longowal accord of 1985 the Mathew Commission resorted to a wholly unnecessary head count in Abohar and Fazilka which stalled the primary objective of restoration of Chandigarh to Punjab on the stipulated date Jan. 26, 1986. The Ranganath Misra Commission turned out to be an elaborate white-wash job to bail out the government and exonerate the ruling party big-wigs, not to punish those guilty of the savagery that had rendered thousands of women and children widows and orphans.

The Eradi Tribunal award on river waters submitted on January 30, 1987 was held back for 108 days before being made public on the eve of election in Haryana and after Punjab had been placed under Central rule. The award actually reduced Punjab's share from 5,406 million acre feet to 5 million acre feet and augmented Haryana's share by 240 per cent. It is another matter that the Centre's strategy completely backfired in Haryana. But the loss of faith both in the Centre's bonafides and the wisdom of the Commissions of enquiry presided over by the ageing sages from India's highest judiciary was total.

As these developments continue to flood upon us we begin to be overwhelmed with the inequity and tend to lose our confidence. However, this is an intellectual as well as emotional response to the current phase of the Sikh history and its conflict with the ruling class. The problem is that history is all mixed up, each year seems to be a little stranger than the one before. We are naturally frustrated—frustrated with government, with our leaders, indeed with ourselves. We turn to one another and ask, "Who is responsible?" Are we at the mercy of some undefined fate? We conveniently skirt the crucial message of GURMAT, the wisdom of God manifested through Gurus, the saints and seers enshrined in guru Granth Sahib. We forget that God may be working through these traumatic events to accomplish the Divine Will in order to draw us closer to HIM. To my mind, Gurmat offers the only certainty in this uncertain world. As we reflect on the times in which we live, we experience the rapidity of mind boggling change. We seek an anchor to provide moorings in this raging tempest. God is our only refuge.

Time for Introspection

The media have, more through ignorance than malice, promoted the fiction that anyone who is baptized with *amrit* in order to become an *amritdhari* is intrinsically fundamentalist. In Sikhism the *amritdhari* is the norm, not the exception. His qualities must not only be

beneficent but appear to be so. He must think and act right. Tolerance is his watch-word. Some of the so-called fundamentalists hold that if liberalism was allowed free rein, not only would the Sikh identity be jeopardized but the Gurmat itself would be imperilled. One has only to remind oneself of the universality of the Gurmat to perceive how fragile this argument is. Sikhism is an inclusive religion not an exclusive social club. In fact that is how the religion developed, and that is how it still functions. The greatest merit of Gurmat, can be seen at the langar in the capital's premier Sikh shrine, Gurdwara Bangla Sahib. Whereas practice forbids a non-Hindu: even a Harijan—to enter the holy shrines at Tirupathy for a of Lord Venkateshwara's image or at Guruvayur in the South, the only condition for entry into a gurdwara anywhere in the world is that no intoxicants must be carried inside, shoes must be discarded and head covered as a mark of reverence. Sinner and saint, Hindu or Muslim, white or black, all are free to enter and partake of the prasad—The Guru's benediction. Exclusiveness takes the pernicious form of divisiveness striking at the very root of our integral unity. Its manifestations are many: The Jat non-Jat factor, the reappearance of casteism, the matrimonial barriers and other social evils. The treatment of *Mazhabi* Sikhs in rural Punjab is a perverse example of the Brahminical inroads in our socio-cultural fabric, still practised because we regard them as people at the lower end of the socio-economic scale. you cannot accept one principle of Gurmat, while violating another principle and still call the organisation the Khalsa panth. If the media have done a great disservice by giving currency to the idea that Sikhs are a sect of Hinduism, we, as Sikhs, have done greater disservice by clinging to the divisive practices that are the very antithesis of Sikhism.

These questions must be answered and practices reversed; at least the related issues must be brought out in the open and not swept under the carpet. Sikhism will lose half its charm if it were to revert to exclusivism. As it is, we have allowed sections of Indian people to drift away from communion with Sikhs; many who used to visit Gurdwaras regularly and listen to the Divine kirtan, now keep away. The sooner we shed our intolerance, the better for us. Attendance in gurdwara (and I am not talking of the historic shrines in the capital) has declined. Inter-community contact has become scarce, breeding suspicion and mistrust. In contrast, we seem to be cheerfully reverting to materialism. The anxiety syndrome seems to be driving more people to alcohol. In Punjab, the consumption of liquor is said to have risen 750% over the decade 1975-84 if the excise statistics are any guide.

Religion & State

No discussion on the subject of current crisis can be complete without dealing with the relationship of religion with State. The term "secular" in the Preamble of Indian Constitution, read with Art 30 on freedom of religion, does not mean just that government may not show favouritism to only one religion but may respect all equally; rather it means that government must be neutral in the matter of religion, neither aiding nor hindering religion. It means that a person may be religious in any way that he she wants without government interference. Freedom means that not only may a person believe as he or she chooses, but that such beliefs, must be put into action. This is all that the Sikhs want from government, no interference, no hindrance, only neutrality. Those who accuse us of mixing religion with politics with be well advised to disengage themselves from the management of the holy places in Delhi, Patna and Nanded.

As for the laws of the State, in principle all laws must be obeyed. There are, however, just laws and unjust laws. A just law is that which is consistent with moral law—it enhances and uplifts society. A law is unjust when it does not measure up to principles of morality, when it discriminates and degrades the human personality and when it is applied to one territory or community and not to all. Struggle against unjust laws has to be peaceful but unceasing. Detention without due process of law and fake encounters are immoral acts. Popular support must be mobilised to restore rule of law. Gurmat, or Guru's path, tells us that in spite of the chaos, of repression by unjust laws, God is in charge, not God of the Sikhs or Hindus, but God of all humanity.

That is the most reassuring fact of life. Not only does it provide confidence but engenders optimism "*Charhdi Kala*" which is the life blood of Gurmat. To be God-accepted God-realised is our best reason for living the righteous, compassionate and dedicated life, demonstrated and demanded by the succession of Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh. Only such life can be meaningful for the individual, the family, the society the country and the human race. We may be passing through the age of technology, of space exploration, of computer miracles, of energy crisis, of environmental pollution, but nothing can save humanity as well as the human principles enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib. Hope springs from the Sikhs' capacity for sacrifice and suffering, for God and country, which is legendary. Politics of violence and revenge has spelt suicidal ruination. Its vicious circle must be broken. Let us make unity, amity and goodwill the cornerstones of our relationship with other communities in the true spirit of *Manas Ki Jat Sabhe the Pahachanve*. Let us stand firm in our resolve to achieve our goals for these goals intersect with practically every aspect of Punjab's progress and the future of the Sikhs.

Sampoornan Kranti Manch recently organised a discussion 'Morality & Politics' inducting participants from the entire national spectrum. Field workers, radical activists, civil liberties organizations, writers and journalists participated in the discussion with enthusiasm. Well known from amongst the participants are: Rajni Kothari, Kuldeep Nayyar, Justice Rajinder Sachar, J.D. Sethi, Dev Dutt, Thakur Dass Bang, Sat Pal, Dr. P.S. Sawhney, Justice V.M. Tarkunde, Ravinder Chaube, Abhishankar Joshi, Dr. Usha Mehta, B.S. Dilawri, V.P. Singh and Vijay Parlap.

The eye-brows raised at the theme of the discussion continue to be ruffled but the discussion served its basic purpose of attracting attention of the thoughtful people to the issues involved in the present day politics not at an abstract level but right at the level of the concrete.

Western Theory

In spite of the impression to the contrary created by the cynics politics and morality are not incommensurate with each other. The most reviled 16th century Italian thinker Niccolo Machiavelli rejected the prevailing Christian morality only to build his politics on the pagan morality of ancient Roman empire. He left that the Christian ethics as preached by the contemporary church taught men to submit, to accommodate to all indignities, and to suffer as willing subjects of the will of God. He deemed this kind of ethic a disaster for a struggling and vibrating people. He knew from his study of Roman history that the ancient Romans were an assertive and contentuous people. They fought and died for glory, honour, fame and wealth. As a result they lived a this-worldly life and practiced an ethic commensurate with the same. Since Italy was trampled at and fleeced by her adversaries Machiavelli felt it imperative to teach and preach an ethic of assertion instead of an ethic of accommodation. Since the Church establishment of the day could not appreciate what Machiavelli was trying to inculcate amongst his countrymen he was reviled as immoral and devil incarnate. In fact the clash was between two kinds of morality—the traditional and the Machiavellian. The latter summed up his view in the sentence when the safety and defence of one's country is at stake all means to help are honourable.

In spite of the alleged immorality or amorality of the Renaissance and the post-Renaissance political thinking the theorists of the period held politics and morality close to each other. Jean Bodin, the reputed theorist of absolute sovereignty put the power of the sovereign state under the moral authority of the law of nature and conventions of property and privilege. In England Thomas Hobbes, known for his absolutism, declared that the "office of the sovereign power consists in the end for which the state is constituted namely the procurement of the safety and

the security of the people". He added, "by security is not meant a sheer physical survival but all other contentments of life which a man with lawful effort and without hurt or injury to the commonwealth can secure for himself."

Gradually the nexus between political power and morality got further closer. Liberalism subordinated power to the freedom of enterprise, rationalism yoked power to progress, and Marx subordinated every thing else to the purposes of a classless society. Our own times are living through the full scale explication of the questions thrown up by the early modern thought.

In one respect Rousseau out-did his compeers. He provided a general theory of the relationship between morality and politics as the problem of legitimacy. We are yet to see the full significance of his basic insight. Rousseau stated the matter straight forward way. **Might cannot endure unless it acquires the nature of right. Power as such is fragile. It is the characteristics of right which strengthen power. Every regime has therefore to constantly legitimate itself in the estimation of the prevailing part of its subjects. Politics in this way is constantly in need of morality—real or sham—depending upon the circumstances of the exercise of power.**

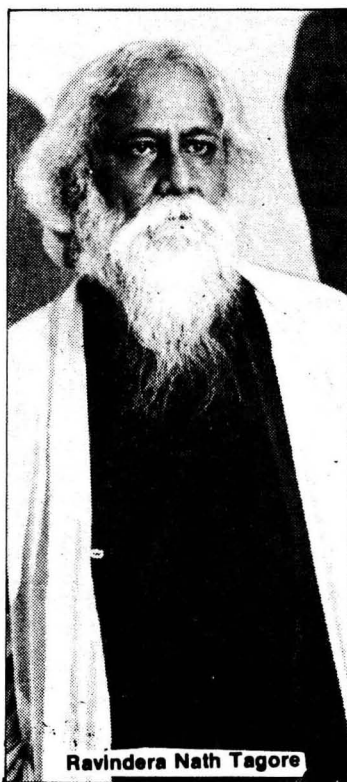
Rousseau not only grasped the problem of legitimacy clearly he also stated the broad parameters within which legitimation in modern times takes shape. He deemed three minimal conditions of a legitimate power. First, the subjects of power should have a feeling of being the makers of that power, second, they should have some say in the making of the laws which they are required to obey, and third, this feeling is possible only if the subjects of law share common notions of right and wrong. The last condition can be stated as partaking in a common morality. Wherever power is exercised—which is quite frequent—contrary to this community of sentiment and reason power serves by and large destructive ends and is eventually itself destroyed. Rousseau like Gandhi made politics conditional upon morality. Even Marx the iconoclast did not go beyond this format. He upheld only a different morality, that of a class-less society and a revolutionary reconstitution of society to end all exploitation.

The constant necessity to legitimate not only ties morality and politics together but also gives birth to all kinds of problems associated with relationship between morality and politics.

Usually the reflection upon the relations between morality and politics takes the form of an occasional comment or a random broadside. As a result our comprehension of the issues involved remains partial and undecided. Serious discussion of the kind held last month provides an opportunity to think the matters through.

Humanism

In spite of the best efforts of humanist, rationalist and anti-clerical thinkers of the West the West has developed morality independent of religion only recently and at best partially. Yet the West has attempted it seriously. In our part of the world even an attempt to develop an ethic independent of religion has not been made. Buddhism in its initial phases of growth was not a religion but only a humanistic ethic. That happy state of things is no more with us. Now people think that even an agnostic is a devotee of an esoteric god. Buddhism is treated by the common man as yet another religion. Gautam is no more a man, he is the Budha the theoretical equivalent of an absolute God in the other religions. Consequently Buddhism is classed as yet another religion. Once we come to that plane we find that now the problem becomes more complex. It becomes most



Ravinder Nath Tagore

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by thee into everwidening thought and action—

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

Ravinder Nath Tagore

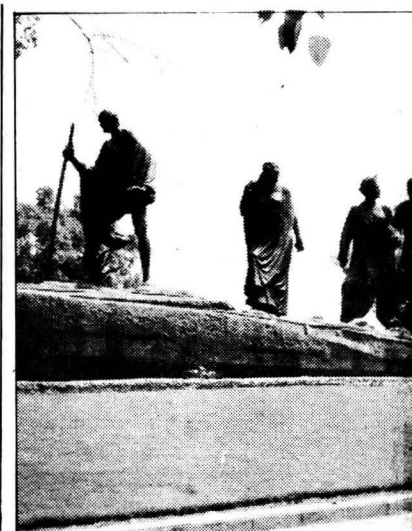
Morality and

complex in a multi-religious society. The humanist has either to universalise Godhood to such a degree that the God so treated is beyond the recognition for the believers in a particular creed or leave the gods unmolested and free to contend against each other and persuade the devotees to wage communal wars. Either way we land amidst Jihads, Yajnas and Dharam Yudhs. If the former of the two above mentioned expedients is adopted we progress from theory to the practice of quarrel, in case we adopt the latter expedient we progress from practice to the theory of the quarrel. In both the cases we live with unnecessary contention and ruination of civil peace.

In the Indian context the matter is compounded with the struggle for the acquisition of scarce resources in a situation of terrible scarcity—may be jobs, lands, means of livelihood, or social and political esteem. We are living through such periods of history and see these conflicts around us in ample measure. People invent theories to keep people out of the compartment if the train is crowded. They will sneer at a chinkee, Southie, a Surd, or Bahman-Bania. If on the contrary the compartment is sparsely occupied and the fear of the brigand on the way imminent, people go out of the way to recognise fellow friendly aspects of others on the platform. They are induced into the compartment by telling them of the common destination and common domicile. If need be even remote relationships are traced through prolonged conversation.

At the present stage of our history we the people of India are buffeted by these powerful cross-currents. Communalism has been perfected into a fine art of acquiring political power through manipulation of the masses. The tradition of rational thinking is feeble. Morality and religion are inseparably inter-twined. One man's religion is other man's heresy. History is distorted to suit the vested interests. Hatred of the other fellow is the principle weapon of winning the support of the co-religionist. The result is a tormenting social existence. If a Gautam, Tulsi, Nanak, Tagore or Gandhi comes for a short visit to this sordid state of affairs he will turn away from the scene with a feeling that he has come to an alien land and not his own. This is the service we are doing to our legacy.

Yes, the jobs are scarce, the opportunities are limited and the resources are in terrible short supply. But how does that justify discrimination against the Muslims or the Christians on the excuse that they represent a fifth column of foreign interests. The Muslims who did not subscribe to the idea of Pakistan—a separate state for the Muslims in 1947 chose to live in India. They declared



Mahtama Gandhi lead

"All humanity is one. Our family and each one of us misdeeds of all others. I am the wickedest soul".

India as their motherland. But within the memory of one living generation—less than quarter of a century they are looked down upon as if they did not belong to this country. Look at their share in power, opportunities, and patterns of life in general. They appear to be wanted by nobody. They declared for a secular democratic India in 1947. But India appears to be becoming less and less capable of fulfilling the promise of the national independence movement. This is the distrust which politicians have created between the morality espoused by the independence movement and politics of the politicians. But that does not mean that no filiation between morality and politics is left anywhere. The alternative political forces will defeat the present cynical manipulators only if they bring together the moral concerns of the independent movement and politics closer. They will undoubtedly do it because history guides the wise but drags the fool.

History makes India

Let no one reflection upon the destiny of India forget that India like any other country is made by history. Her tradition is an ever-expanding composite culture.

After each of Mahmud Ghaznavi's invasions (A.D. 998—1030). Turkish and Persian soldiers settled in the Punjab, married Indians and, with the second and third generations, which had now no first hand experience or memory of the country of their fathers' or grand-fathers' origin, the process of Indianisation started. A period of peaceful contact between the Persians (although at home Turkish speaking) conquerors and the Punjabi people prepared the soil for the cultural osmosis. Even Mahmud Ghaznavi, the iconoclast, actually wanted to

Politics

G.S. Sandhu



ing the Nation.

*...and indivisib
is responsible for th
not detach from th*

Mahatma Gandhi

proach his Indian subjects in
their own language in his coins.
matterji mentions that
ahmud's silver *dirham*
roduced the translation of the
abic creed and his name and
nt mark and date in the Hijra
a—all in Sanskrit.

The rapprochement between
uslims and Hindus was
ntinued by the Pathan ruler
ahabuddin. Muhammad
hori, who in his personal
ime of Muhammad bin
imstruck coins employing the
dian Nagari (Sri mahamada
ma, samira amir) imitating
e bull and horseman coins of
e Hindu kings of Afghanistan,
d even using the figures of
oddes Lakshmi.

As time passed, the
rnacular Urdu-Hindi,
serted itself. McGregor notes
at the 12th century
abrahmsa work *Sandesa-
ska* was composed by a
uslim named Abdurrahman in
style influenced by vernacular
eech, and it dealt with topics
und not only in Sanskrit
etry but also in later Hindi
etry. Another, and even
rlier example of how the
dian vernacular was
tracting literary figure is that
the 11th century Persian poet
asud Sa'd Salman who is
ported to verse in Hindavi.

In general, the language
rough which the immigrant
uslims of the north-west
uld most readily voice an
dian dimension of their lives,
rites McGregor, was their
cently acquired Indian
rnacular, or vernaculars. It
pears that a need for self-
pression in vernacular was
lt at least as strongly by
uslims as by non-Muslims at
is time. Here already are
ggested, says McGregor, the
eginnings of a cultural
pproximation between
uslims and non-Muslims in
orth India.

Soon another development
ccurred, spontaneously, on
e side of both Muslims and
indus which gave a great

impetus to the development of
this people's language, the
early Urdu-Hindi, and laid the
foundation of an integrated
Muslim. Hindu culture. This
was, of course, the rise of
Sufism, especially that of the
Chishti order, and the Bhakti
movement. The Muslim Sufi
mystics found a receptive
audience in Indian people
influenced by the nath yogis,
the worshippers of Siva. At the
same time, the sufis absorbed
many of the doctrines and
practices of the yogis. Through
such process the groundwork
was laid for two distinct, yet
related developments in
religious thought and Urdu-
Hindi literature.

One development is to be
seen in the Sufi allegorical
romances, of which the first
known example appears in the
late 14th century. These are
written in the frank expression
and the simple style common in
the popular Urdu-Hindi love
poetry of the time.

The other development is
seen in the verse of the poets
called Sant, mystics of a
markedly protestant type
whose leading representative
was Kabir who looked beyond
the contemporary experience
of their society to a rejection of
both Hindu and Muslim
teachings and observances.

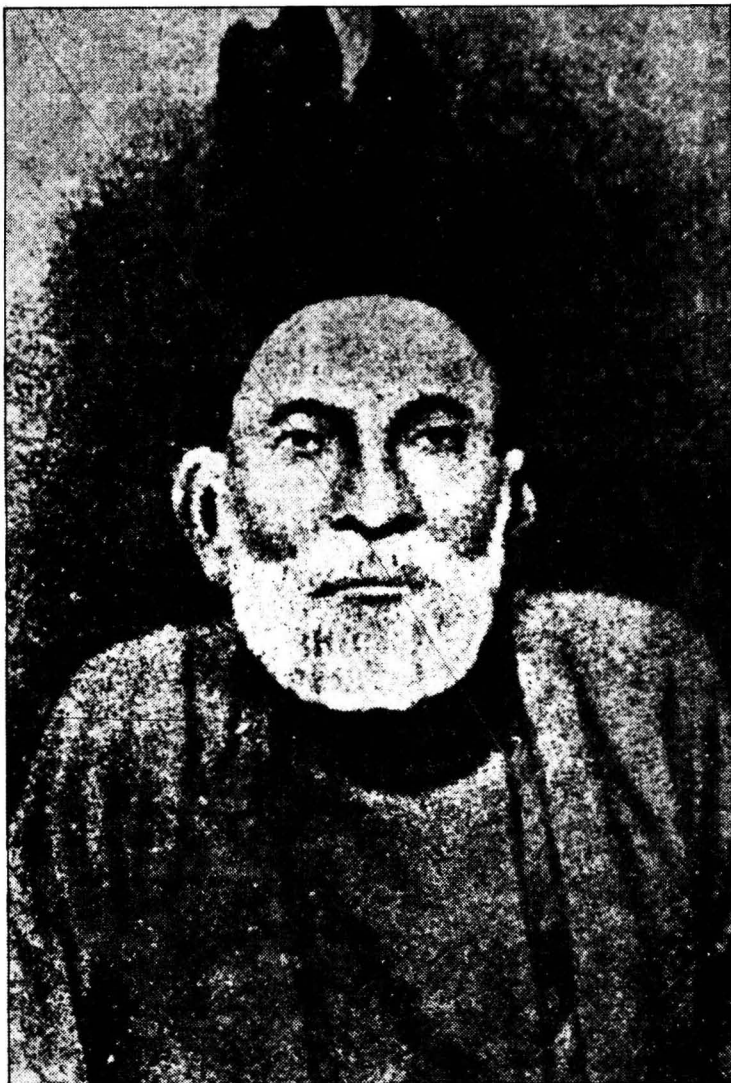
Thus, McGregor concludes,
the existence of common
ground between nath yogis and
sufis encouraged the formation
of new religious and social
attitudes, which later found
expression, in the 14th century,

in a vigorous literature.

While the sufis and bhaktis
were laying the foundations of a
popular language and
literature, and of a
noncommunal Indian culture,
in the spiritual realm, equally
far-reaching developments
were taking place in Deccan
which were leading to the same
results in a much wider sphere.
One of these developments was
the decision of Muhammad Bin
Tughlaq to transfer capital from
Delhi to Daulatabad in 1327,
which resulted in a major shift
in population from the north to
the south. Another
development was the rise of
independent kingdoms in the
south and a further factor was
long periods of peace in this
region in the 14th and 15th
centuries.

As is well known, Akbar,
inspired by the sufi teachings,
invented the Deene-Ilahi, with
the specific purpose of bringing
Hindus and Muslims together.
He took great interest in the
translations of Sanskrit works
into Persian. The intellectual
atmosphere at court underwent
a radical transformation. An
open mindedness towards
other religions began to make
its appearance among scholars
and literati.

In one from or another, this
thrust towards Indianisation
and towards a composite Hindu
and Muslim culture was
continued during the regions of
Akbar's successors and, in the
literary sphere, culminated in
Dara Shikoh's translation of the
Upanishads into Persian under
the title of *Sirr-i-Akbar* ('The
Great Secret'). In Annemarie
Schimmel's words, it was 'a
most remarkable work which
became one of the "sacred
scriptures" of European idealist
philosophers after Anquetil
Duperron translated it into



*"Do good and good will be done to you, This is
the only prayer of the saint".*

Mirza Ghalib



M. N. Roy

*"Freedom is not an abstract ideal. For the
masses of people in India as well as in other
countries, it has a definite connotation. It means
freedom from all sorts of wants, privations and
dis-advantages, which often render their daily life
a drudgery".*

M.N. Ro

Latin in 1801.

Divide and rule

The British theory of divide
and rule is well-known.
What is less well-known is
the adoption of similar tactics
by the present day politicians to
corner power for vested
interests. A humanitarian
stance is a challenge to their
power politics. As a result they

*"Thou art the River,
all thy creatures abide
in Thee, None else is
there without Thee, O
Lord".*

Guru Nanak

swear by the morality of the
independence struggle but in
practice resort to the imperial
practice of divide and rule. This
sham will not fool the people for
long and the alternative
humanist paradigms will
emerge and challenge this
fraud sooner than later. In fact
the effort has gone on for the

last half a century or more.

The Seminar

The Delhi seminar was an
attempt to expose the
seamy side of the politics
of divide and rule. The speaks
subscribed to the humanist
morality of man as the measure
of everything. They all
converged to the idea of a
secular democratic polity for the
Indian subcontinent. They
emphasised that people should
not pin all their hopes on the
present centralised and
communalised structure of
power. This state of things must
change in favour of de-
centralisation of power,
initiative with the people, and a
really democratic and secular
polity. Behind every democratic
polity there stand a lasting
democratic society. The task of
building such a society has
hardly begun in earnest and
least of all by the present day
rulers.

*"The ancient religious tradition of India tries to
build up a fellowship of believers, not by
subordinating individual qualities to the group
mind but by bringing them into harmony with
each other. This fellowship is based on the
principle of diversity in unity which alone has the
quality of creativeness".*

S. Radhakrishnan

*"To see the universal and all prevailing Spirit of
Truth face to face one must be able to love the
meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who
aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any
field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has
drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say
without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all
humility, that those who say that religion has
nothing to do with politics do not know what
religions means."*

Mahatma Gandhi

Mother was sitting quietly on a *modha* and kinting. Father was not there in the room. Father's coat was there, smelling of Nephthalene. He looked at the changed version of his room and left quite uneasy. Gathering himself he told Mother he had come.

He had hoped that Mother would be standing at the gate and waiting. That was why he

cigaretteends, ash and bottles of beer and whisky—lying about in the room. He tried to assume an expression of surprise. He placed the glass of milk on the floor and climbed on the *modha*, to show her the empty bottles lying beneath the old newspapers on top of the wardrobe.

Mother saw and expressed no surprise, but only a relief over the unfolding of a secret. Her

receive' his parents. Quite incuriously he kept smoking on the platform and when he saw the train approaching, he threw away the fag and washed his hands. He did not forget that Father took smoking very seriously. He too was at fault in the matter. One day, due to his carelessness, his *charpoy* and the sheets had caught fire and his younger sister told him that when she returned from college

when he looked at his neighbour.

"I think something is disturbing you again and again and you are all the time avoiding it. It is about a girl?" Mother looked anxiously at him.

He said, fortunately he had never got mixed up with girls.

"Who is P?" mother asked. "Kishori was telling me somethin."

of the *Gita* for Mother. One of his friend owned a bookstall.

He took out the books and hurled them carelessly on to the almirah. Only yesterday he had covered those books.

"I want the *Ramayana* in big letters. I can't read the old one. Its lettering is very small." Mother started cleaning her glasses with the edge of her sari.

The Lonely Voice

Ravindra Kalia

had paid off the scooterwallah at the turning of the lane. But looking at the room he felt that

What he had dreaded had already taken place. The wardrobe was not in its place, shoes were lying in the rack and instead of waiting at the gate, Mother was knitting mechanically without her glasses.

"I was waiting for you. Do you always come back at this hour?" she asked.

He said that he usually came back at that hour and played organ for some time and then went to bed.

"I have no faith in anything you say" Mother. "The neighbour was saying that you came back late at night and sometimes didn't come back at all, and very often for days together you locked yourself indoors."

he said he had never seen this neighbour. He did not talk to her. he did not even know how many kids she had had. Last summer, she must have had one because he was given this wardrobe at that time. Her husband said they were running short of space. they were constantly running short of space.

He wanted to divert Mother's attention.

"Why don't you talk to them? Who else you think is your in this big city? You must maintain at least a formal acquaintance." Mother was serious.

He said he knew about it all and sometimes he said "Hello" to them. Mother started heating milk and asked, "What will you have along with milk?"

He said he didn't take milk. he would take ginger biscuits and coffee.

"These bitter biscuits!" said Mother. "Why do you annoy me? Why don't you look after your health. You have gone so dark!"

His words had no effect. She handed him the glass of milk as though he would drink it.

"Your father was glad there was no cigarette ash in the room."

He said he had given up smoking. He felt happy he could clean the room so well. He looked at the wardrobe and the rack and felt sorry over his foolishness. He could have thrown away all those things but he had been waiting for the wastepaper-buyer. He looked at his mother. He felt Mother was getting old. Last time, when he had seen her, she had no wrinkles about her neck. He did not want to be defeated by her. He said when he came to this house there were countless

smile broke out from in between her wrinkles, "So these aren't yours."

He laughed and said if they were his, wouldn't he throw them!

Mother did not laugh nor seemed convinced. She wanted to sound him thoroughly.

"Your father saw and was very sorry. He wanted we should go back immediately. He gets upset over things of little importance."

He wished to ask where was Father but he could not. He was feeling a sense of guilt. He had no idea that his parents would start cleaning the house as soon as they reached here.

His shoes were in the rack. He looked inside his shoes. There was nothing. When Mother went into the kitchen, he opened the almirah and fumbled for something behind books. Without looking at it, he stuffed a cellophane packet. If only he had thrown away all these things! Perhaps he had never thrown away such things. He could have given it to his neighbour but he knew that his neighbour did not believe in it; he believed in God. His parents must have been struck by its presence. He stood, ashamed. He had often seen such a packet in Father's almirah. He had discovered the hiding place, too, from him, or had acquired it by right of heredity. The first time he had seen it he was amazed but he hadn't been able to inquire about it for he knew that Father hid only those things behind books which he could not explain. Father used to keep his certificates, life-insurance policy, the house registration letter rolled in a round iron-box, all behind his books. He also kept his pass book there. As a boy, whenever he found an opportunity, he always studied Father's pass book.

He stood there in a state of indecision. Then he unbuttoned his shirt. He hid a few foreign magazines inside his *banyan*, rebuttoned his shirt and sat unhappily on the *modha*, undoing his shoestrings. This morning too, he had woken up with the same feeling of depression. It was after years he had seen the morning in this city and he felt disturbed that buses were running so early, people stood in queues at the milk booths and newspapers were distributed even earlier. Or perhaps he knew about all this but he did not know that he woke up so late. Before going to the station he could hardly convince himself that he was 'to

that day, Father was busy throwing bucketfuls of water on the bed. However, this matter was never discussed by them. But after that incident he stopped looking at cigarette advertisements in the newspapers in Father's presence. What was more, when the Radio Ceylon broadcast cigarette ads he was obliged to tune in elsewhere.

As his parents alighted, he found them very familiar. Some how he had not hoped to recognise them so easily and he had not thought faces could be that familiar. He mumbled something by way of courtesy and was convinced that he had a mother whose neck was showing wrinkles, who had a broken tooth and who could place her hand on his head so possessively. He had a father like anybody's father, whose hair had turned all grey and who was continually spitting. As he looked it them again, he felt they were toys whom he would place on the mantelpiece. But he had no mantelpiece at home, not even there Mother would be cross, not even a broomstick. He was talking to them and wondering why he wrote to them so halfheartedly. He read their letters and stuffed them most carelessly in his pocket. Perhaps he could have written much more to them but he never did. He always wrote a few crammed up lines about which his younger sister always felt very annoyed. She often complained about his letters bearing the same content and what was worse, written in black ink. Her complaint was justifiable. If she had not got married, they would have seen the sea together.

As he got up from the *modha* he knocked against the glass of milk and the milk spilt.

"You didn't want it, so you didn't have it," Mother said entering the room.

He tiptoed to the bed. From the adjoining window he looked at the lane. The old woman in the lane was munching in her usual manner. He put his back to the window.

"Have you quarrelled with somebody? Why do you look so depressed?" asked Mother.

He said he hadn't quarrelled with anybody and that he was not depressed. He was, perhaps, tired.

"I feel you are being inconvenienced by our oreros"

He said he was very glad to have them and he was feeling nice too.

He said he never felt amused

He said Kishori must have brought up some ageold issue.

"You had written to him that you had been feeling very lonely. He came and told me... You know, his wife again had twins."

He said he was writing all that to fool Kishori but he didn't know Kishori would still talk so childishly.

He felt sorry that from now on he would not be able to write to Kishori either. He had been writing to Kishori because he was miles away and he liked breaking down like a meteor, not near about but thousands of miles away.

Mother spilt the water from the waterjue and mopped the floor. His socks were slightly wet. Mother put away the socks, placed his shoes in the rack and sat beside him on the *charpoy*. She started caressing him on the forehead.

He felt as if he would cry.

"What has happened to you? What is wrong with you?" Mother looked at him almost helplessly. He wanted to say she should have faith in him, nothing had happened to him and nothing was wrong with him, but he remained silent. He never liked talking in sticky sentimental tones. He sat with his eyes cast down. He couldn't stand the fact that Mother was trying to know him and was anxious about him when nothing was really wrong with him.

"What have you put inside you shirt?" Mother asked as she fingered his shirt.

He said those were books. He was not in the habit of holding books while walking.

"Let me see what books?"

He said they were in English and soon he would bring a copy

"Not even with galsses on?" It was probably the first time he had asked her something.

"No. the left eye is almost defunct."

He said he would take a day's casual leave tomorrow and get her eyes tested.

"You only need an excuse to take a casual."

He laughed. Mother was after all his mother. She kissed his hand. It must have smelt of nicotine but she did not say anything.

If only he had gathered himself together nearly before parents arrived, he thought. But before this, he had never felt he was disorganised.

Mother went out and he felt his nerves go tense. Last night he had hidden the bottle of tranquiliser. He quietly climbed on to the top of the wardrobe

and took out the bottle from the hinges of the ventilator. He put it in his pocket.

There was no water in the jug. He took a galss from the kitchen and went to the tap. Putting a pill in his mouth he gulped it down.

"What have you taken?"

He turned round like a C.I.D. constable—Mother was standing behing him.

"What have you taken? Speak out." She was trembling with fear and fury.

He said he had headache and had taken Anacin.

He was holding the glass tight. Mother took the glass from him and gulped some water. Then she filled the waterjug. He stood guiltily for some time, then followed Mother into the room.

Mother held out some pills from her purse and asked, "What pills are these?"

These were his ever familiar pills.

"Do you know what all was found in you bed?" These pills, letters and pins! Have you ever cleaned your bed?" Mother was excited.

He said he cleaned not the whole bed but only the sheet some time. This morning he had taken out a new sheet.

"What are these pills for?" Mother insisted. "If you don't tell me, I shall take them myself and see."

He picked up the pills from Mother's palm and said these were not those pills with which his friend committed suicide. These were meant to relieve exhaustion and were prescribed by an authorised destor. He no longer felt exhausted and took proper care of his health. He took his meals regularly. He was never fond of milk but he hoped that with Ovaltine he might like it...

He was talking while Mother was looking at him helplessly at though she was seeing him die a slow death.

A Correction

In the Forum Gazette issue dated 5 October—4 November 1987 the names of Prof. Rajni Kothari and Prof. Ashwani Ray below their pictures were inter charged the error is regreted.

Book Review

Voice of the Dalits

UNTOUCHABLE Voice of the Dalit Liberation Movement by Barbara R Joshi, (ed.), New Delhi, Selectbook Service Syndicate, 1986, pp ix+161, Price not given

principles of social fellowship with out any consideration of caste and creed'.

Starting with, 'Roots of Revolt' in the first chapter, the editor (she) has attempted to sketch the emergence of conscious and viciferous

India is a peculiar society, a unique conglomeration of castes, religions, languages and cultures. Multiple societies do exist in other parts of the world, but sensitizational level is not that drastic to convert it into hatred, violence and killings, that too of the innocent, the meak, the weak, the poor and the oppressed. This trend has continued for years and centuries and continues unabated.

The book is an expression of the cumulative experiences of the "silent in pain, the mute in agony, the oppressed in distress, the neglected in chains, the chains of poverty, the hunger the lowliness, the tyranny and the hatred", perpetuated by their own countrymen, the benevolent fellowmen, who are thier constitutional counter parts in the eyes of law, but have placed them down the earth in social hierarchy and labelled them as 'untouchables'.

The appeal and truth of the experiences is that these have been narrated by those who have experienced them in one or the other form, being members of 100 million Indians, known as out-castes, legally identified as scheduled castes and so on. It is an expression of the grief and misery through words of the distressed multitudes of Indian society. The book is also an attempt to explore the intellectual richness of Dalit India, because most of the contributors belong to this section of society and have contributed much to human knowledge, though they adered to be incapable of contributing anything to knowledge, because it is the preserve of the higher castes.

India is a peculiar society, a unique conglomeration of castes, religions, languages and cultures. Multiple societies do exist in other parts of the world, but sensitizational level is not that drastic to convert it into hatred, violence and killings, that too of the innocent, the meak, the weak, the poor and the oppressed. This trend has continued for months and months, for years and centuries and continues unabated.

The book is a message for "cultural revolution", call, a challenge, and a warning to status-quoists, that the depressed can no longer afford to live in poverty, squalor, ignorance and illiteracy, they are determined to fight for a society based on common mode of life, in which human dignity and individual integrity may be connected with

untouchable opposition to the social values and religious hierarchies of Hindu society, later stretching to social and economic realities of untouchables, the need for organisations at grassroots, the role of the legislatures, courts and public policy makers in changing the life-style of the oppressed, the book ends with a call for struggle in the last chapter titled 'Designs for Struggle'. Who is going to lead this struggle has not been elaborately described, more particularly with the disappointment of the editor with the left in Indian? The editor says", There has been discouragingly little active leadership from the left in developing a vision of working-class unity explicitly including Untouchables as equal partners.

Organisers of the Left, like those of the Centre and the Right, find it easier to avoid confronting the bigotry of those who make up the largest pool of potential supporters. Organisational expediency is reinforced by the short-term pressures of electoral politics. Indian politics is open to the Left; a variety of socialist and communist parties have formed state governments (the latest being Kerala and West Bengal in March, 1987 elections) and are routinely represented in Parliament".

The editor has a complaint that 'their presence as active electoral competitors has kept alive critical issues and options, but the immediate search for votes has also discouraged attention to thorny minority issues' High Hopes have been pinned on Dalit Panthers and DS-4 (Dalit Shoshit Samaj Sangharsh Samiti) led by Mr Kanshiram to fight for the cause of these oppressed classes. Their action programme in the form of 'Miracle of Two Feet and Two Sheels' has been vividly described alongwith the 'dalit theatre' dalit literature' as vehicles of socio-economic liberation.

DS-4 has very recently (in March, 1987) assembly elections made a dent into

Congress holds, but with the multiplicity of parties in India, how successfully it can withstand the test of electoral victory is yet to be seen. Without capturing political power, these parties can at the most act as pressure groups. Dr B R Ambedkar as a torchbearer of the depressed classes has been rightly quoted very elaborately throughout the book. Ambedkar was a humanist through and through. He emphatically elaborated and enriched the concept of social democracy. According to him, "Democracy is a mode of associated living. The roots of democracy are to be found in social relationship in terms of the associated life between the people who form the society".

Hindu scriptures have been exhaustively quoted, with various quotations from Manusmriti, which is considered to have been the base-well of the evil of untouchability in India. (pp 148-152) Chronological description of various cases of atrocities on untouchables, utilisation of job-reservation facilities with its impact on socio-economic life of these classes, the caste-war in Gujarat etc have been fully supported by facts and figures. The poems make emotional reading and one is deeply moved by the pathetic way of life the poor people are made to live. Chapter two is the sul of the book while chapter six is a soul-searching exercise.

Though brief references have been made to the role of MPs, MLAs from these castes in legislatures and their involvement in public policy matters, the attempt seems to be a scape-shadow to cover the incompetence and failures of the elected members, for whom seats have ben reserved constitutionally to speak for these castes. After all their number is 78 in the Central Parliament and a good number in the state legislatures to speak for them. Their continuous silence (though the author maintains that their participation is not reported by the media intentionally, (p-118) but that does not seem to be convincing) in these august bodies cannot be justified in any way. They have failed to raise the issues concerning their own brethren.

Rather the book has failed to expose the do-gooders who in the name of backwardness enter the portals of elected bodies very smoothly, out never to speak, who undergo beauty treatments to hide the dark skin so as to conceal the traces of low-caste and share the beauties of higher caste and high-cost living, who feel shy of mixing with those brethren who elected them to speak for them, have created classes within classes, castes within castes, prejudices within prejudices, hatred within hatred, and still continue to prosper under the camouflage of duplicative and exploitative symbolism.

The temptation to rise up in the social hierarchy leaving behind the other lots is very strong in them. They leave behind an ocean of weak, whose eyes are tear-dip and mild to see a ray of hope, since they are their liberators, and the constitutional champions to speak for them. Reservation has

Untouchable!

Voice of the Dalit Liberation Movement

Barbara R Joshi

Untouchable! Voice of the Dalit Liberation Movement

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become the reserve of the few privileged among these classes. The authors should have touched upon these issues very seriously.

The book is however thought-provoking, exhorts those in power to read the

writing on the wall and assess the simmering disillusionment in the 'silent-actors' of Indian history, which they want to change but are presently held up to change

N.L. Madan

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On the Occasion of
42nd Anniversary

The United Nations

J.M. Manchanda

On the western coast of United States of America, in a city called San Francisco, fifty nations of the world chose to sign what is now popularly known as the UN Charter. In less than four months, the charter had been ratified by the Governments of China, France the Soviet Union, Great Britain, the United States and a majority of signatory countries. Thus, the UN was born on 24th of October, 1945.

The occasion was full of significance. The world left behind two world wars, which had brought deadly devastation and immense suffering to entire mankind. It accepted the futility of League of Nations, which was formed in 1919, because it failed to prevent the Second World War. It accepted the fact that with the invention of deadlier weapons, the entire humanity can be destroyed on this earth. That is what prompted the statesmen of the world to meet at least on seven occasions, before the historic meeting at San Francisco on 26th on June, 1945.

The members of the United Nations pledged "to save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war", "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights", "to practice tolerance, maintain international peace and security", to shun the use of armed force and to work for "the economic and social advancement of all peoples". Laudable objectives! And no wonder, the membership of United Nations has swelled to 159 over the years. The list, drawn alphabetically, begins with Afghanistan and ends with Zimbabwe.

The UN functions through several organs. While the General Assembly, the Security Council figure quite often in the news, the Economic and Social Council, Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice (currently presided over by Dr. Nagendra Singh of India) and the Secretariat work discreetly all the time. The UN has its headquarters on eighteen acres of land in New York, which is international territory and where its own rules apply. It has its own flag, postage stamps without being a nation or a world government. Nor does it have a regular army, since there are no UN citizens to be defended.

Its principal task has been to maintain peace around the world—a job which it has tried to do with varying measures of success. During the forty or odd years of its existence, it has tried to intervene in Zaire, Korea, Iran-Iraq and Indo-Pak wars, Cyprus, Kampuchea and

the Middle East. Disarmament has been its main concern and it has tried to make the world realize that some 800 billion US dollars that the world spends on arming itself can be better spent on feeding the poor. In the summer of 1978, the General Assembly even held a special session on Disarmament.

Peaceful exploration of outer space and sea-beds, curbing racialism and apartheid, establishment of a just and equitable international Economic Order and laying down targets for international development have been its other main activities. It has tried to develop and codify International Law through a commission formed in 1947 so that international disputes can be settled without taking recourse to the use of arms. The celebration of International Women's Year in 1975 and the declaration of 1979 as the International Year of the Child indicate its concern for their upliftment.

The UN has had its own failures. Critics dismiss it as a ground hallowed by sacred talk with nothing concrete to offer. To some extent, it is true. The nations have turned away from International Court of Justice whenever they found the verdict going against them. The U.S.A. recently claimed that the Court had exceeded its jurisdiction in directing it to suspend aid to rebels trying to dislodge the Government in Nicaragua. The UN failed to resolve the disputes between Israel and its neighbours, India and Pakistan, North and South Korea, South Africa and the frontline African States, Kampuchea and Vietnam. The International Economic Order is still biased heavily in favour of the rich nations. Apartheid raises its ugly head off and on. The gulf between the developing and the developed countries widens everyday. The undernourished child and the oppressed woman is not a thing of the past.

This is not to say that UN is irrelevant. Probably, we may not have achieved a good deal through it, but we have at least been able to avert what could be worse. The wars quite often have been frozen through cease-fires and the UN allows a large number of countries, especially in the Third World to focus attention upon the problems being faced by a majority of them. We have to remember that so long you can talk, there is always a hope that you will not fight. And so long there is UN, you can always hope for a better future made brighter and securer through universal brotherhood.

Amnesty concern for asylum seekers

NEW YORK, Oct 7—Amnesty International, in a rare indictment of Western powers, has expressed concern at recent trends, especially in Western Europe and North America, of turning down applications for asylum from political refugees.

In its 1987 report Amnesty, described as "the most effective human rights organisation in the world", notes that "there is a real risk that this is leading to unfair and arbitrary decisions."

"Some Governments are preventing asylum seekers from setting foot in their countries," it said. In one instance the report recounts how when 1,300 Tamils from Sri Lanka sought asylum in the United Kingdom in May, 1985, the British Government imposed a visa re-requirement on Sri Lankans which, it said, was the first time such a requirement has been placed on citizens of a Commonwealth country.

While it carries the expected criticism of such infamous rights abusers like South Africa, Chile and Pakistan it does not neglect abuses in the USA and other Western democracies.

"While Amnesty International's statutory concerns relate to

prisoners, the organisation opposes the forcible return of any person to a country where he or she may reasonably expected to be imprisoned as a prisoner of conscience, tortured or executed," the report said.

The international organisation said it "has observed that the international protection of refugees has been made more difficult in recent years. Governments have become increasingly reluctant to grant asylum in the face of growing refugees' numbers and deepening economic problem," it said.

It noted that the US authorities had intercepted boatloads of Haitian refugees and sent them back home. Problems also occurred, it said, for people trying to help those seeking refuge, who had themselves been subjected to persecution.

It said: "in the USA the church-based 'sanctuary movement' has openly challenged the application of US immigration laws by seeking to provide a safe haven to some of the many Salvadorans and Guatemalans."

Amnesty International said eight of the defendants in the

movement were convicted and given five years' probation while three were acquitted. Amnesty said it would have adopted those convicted as prisoners of conscience if they had been given prison sentences.

"Although amnesty International did not dispute the rights of the USA to enforce its immigration laws", it said, "the defendants had been convicted of breaking laws which in their current practice, directly facilitated human violations to which the organisation was opposed."

Amnesty International noted that the death penalty continued to be the main concern in the USA. "Eighteen prisoners were executed during the year bringing to 68 the number executed since the death penalty was reinstated in the seventies."

It said the organisation continued to campaign against the use of death penalty in the USA and other countries. Set up in 1961, Amnesty International with its headquarters in London has 600,000 members throughout the world, of whom 260,000 are in the USA.—(India Abroad News Service).

Don't Mock at Poverty

Ayub Sayed

RAJIV Gandhi's flying visits to drought-hit areas have shocked the country. Enormous expenditure apart—each visit costs the poverty-stricken country over Rs. one crore—the paraphernalia, the pomp, the show and the callousness with which the emaciated shadows of humans are being treated remind one of the imperial days. Even the British rulers used to get down from their high horse to talk to their subjects. Prime Minister, neatly dressed in sparkling khadi kurtapyjamas, talks to his subjects from behind the steering wheel of his bullet-proof, air conditioned jeep specially flown from Delhi.

The TV shots remind one of the grand movies of Cecil B. de Mille or K. Asif's Mughal-e-Azam. On his latest Orissa jaunt, Indian Express's young reporter Ruben Banerjee could not restrain himself: "If at all the Prime Minister left any impression on the villagers," he wrote, "it was only that of awe. The 70-odd-vehicle motorcade zooming past was undoubtedly an impressive sight."

"The obsession of Mr. Gandhi's entourage appeared to be driving at breakneck speed. Sharing the front seat with his wife in a chauffeur-driven Ambassador car, the Prime Minister covered nearly 240 km in about six hours. He hardly stopped anywhere. And he chose to halt mostly at those places where he found Congress flags and festoons welcoming him, for accepting

floral bouquets."

Each visit to these hunger-stricken villages was preceded by construction of helipads, new roads, painting of walls and trees, distribution of alms, very temporary employment of people who walk like skeletons, tutoring of simple folks about doles they get on the eve of the visit. He speaks to the old and infirm like a tourist, and invariably accompanying Chief Ministers, politicians and officials misinterpret him or do not allow his subjects to say more than a few words. He accepts petitions from shivering hands, passes them over to officials and remarks with a smile: 'kuch gar barnazar ata hai.'

It is a sin to be poor in this country. But it is greater sin to collect skeletons on the roadside and ask them whether they have been receiving enough food, enough water to drink, enough clothes to hide their shame, and to show the sordid drama on TV for millions to watch.

Never before in our history were the poor subjected to so much humiliation by a democratically elected leader. Even the Mughals and the Maharajas used to visit their subjects disguised as commoners, and their vazirs dared not hide secrets or tell lies.

Rajiv Gandhi may have been born with a silver spoon in his mouth, but he has no right to mock at poverty, hunger and starvation.

(Courtesy Current)

संचेतना

संचेतना उपहार
में दीजिए इससे
उनके पास प्रति
मास आपकी
प्यार भरी याद
पहुंचेगी। इसे
भरकर हमारे
पास भेजिए।

महोदय,
निम्न लिखित व्यक्ति/व्यक्तियों को मेरी
ओर से संचेतना एक वर्ष/तीन वर्ष/
आजीवन/के लिए भेजिए पत्रिका का शुल्क
मनीआर्डर/चेक/ड्राफ्ट द्वारा भेज रहा हूँ।

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Credit for the Rural Poor Emergence of new Exploiters: A Survey, I

Hazari Singh Pankaj

The Kol tribals living in Patha area of Banda district have never been indebted to the extent that they face indebtedness today. The private moneylenders may have been exploiters but they could not have caused so much indebtedness as the new infrastructure of rural credit has succeeded in foisting on the tribals and other sections of the rural poor.

This survey of this situation is mainly confined to Manikpur block. According to the 1981 census the population of this block is 74803.

It is difficult to give an exact estimate of the total government loans because several government and semi-government institutions are involved. But in most Kol families one finds a member of cooperative credit society who has to clear his loan. The cooperative bank at manikpur has to recover loans worth around five and half millions Rs. In addition several families are indebted to other banks adding up to a much higher amount.

In 1962, 11 collective agriculture co-operative societies were formed in the name of the kols of which most of them were not even aware. While loans were entered in the name of Kols the cash was cornered by officials and middlemen. In 1966 short and long terms loans were sanctioned to the kols by the cooperative Bank. Those given...hundred Rs. were asked to give thumb impressions on loans application for Rs. 500.

In manikpur block there are nearly a dozen co-operative societies which give mainly crop loans (for instance in the form of fertilisers, seed, pesticides etc.) and in addition they also give medium term loans for purchasing animals of good breed.

Mounting Indebtness

The failure to return some of these crop loans combined with some manipulation by officials have led to such huge indebtedness that kols cannot clear it. Such cases were represented before former Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Diman Singh, widely regarded as a very honest official, on December 7, 1986 in Cheriha Bujurg Kolan settlement. In some cases original loans of Rs. 200 had resulted in recovery notices of Rs. 3800. How is this any better than private moneylenders? The Kols of this settlement owe nearly 150000 Rs. to Rukma Khurd Society. At the time of the sowing of rabi crop in 1986, this society is alleged to have foisted fictitious loans (in the form of chemical fertilizers), worth over nearly Rs. 40 thousand. How could they have used so much fertiliser as most of their rocky land remain unsown or else is under the control of others, and no irrigation is available. One

cannot but wonder how the field supervisor could have affirmed or approved this?

Receipts are frequently not given to Kols at the time of recovery of loans. In Ooncha Dih village an official went to recover a loan from Jhulur Kol. Jhulur said he has the money but before he gives the money a receipt should be made out. But the Secretary forced him to part with the money without a receipt. At a 'Kol Social Awareness Camp' an official of the Co-operatives Department had admitted that excessive loans had been forced on the Kols and irregularities had been committed in the recovery of loans.

For long-term loans there is a land-development bank at the Tehsil level which gives loans for tubewells, tractors, pumping sets etc. Loans of this category amounting to nearly 10 million rupees are shown in the name of Kols. Some years back pumping sets were purchased from a unit in Agra and given to influential people of the area against loans shown in the name of poor Kols. A dispute over the sharing of the loot led to an exposure of the scandal, an investigation was ordered and the pumping sets were seized, which are still scattered in the Kotwali (Police station). But till false loans with nearly Rs. 4 lakhs continued to remain in the name of the Kols.

The Banks

Four harijans of Harijanpur Colony initiated efforts to purchase pumping sets utilising loans from the Manikpur branch of Allahabad Bank. The file was prepared quickly, their signatures were taken, but then a dispute relating to the model of the pumping set erupted. When they saw that this bank was not willing to finance the purchase of the model desired by them, they decided not to avail of this loan. They asked the bank Manager to cancel the loan and went to the land development bank at Karvi. From there they got pumping sets with which they are still irrigating their field. But after some time a recovery notice came from both the banks—the Allahabad Bank as well as the Land Development Bank.

When Nanhuwa Kol of Sakroha village got a recovery notice for a loan taken for the purchase of a pumping set he was shocked because he had never applied for this loan. Inquiries revealed that a loan had indeed been given by land development bank in his name but it was in reality used by some one else.

Sometimes officials in collusion with dealers foist implements on poor families even though these are not needed by them and do not add to their income. How can they return the loans? In Bambiha Kolan settlement Rupna and Shivprasad Malviya were

amazed to see pump sets being delivered at their houses even though they had never applied for these. Their barren land has no access to an irrigation source, so what can they do with the pump set? It is lying unused. Now they are scared to

death of the impending recovery.

Suar Gara Kolan settlement is located near Manikpur block headquarters. The land of four Kols Brij Lal, Fuber, Bhola and Mithai Lal is rocky with no

prospects for cultivation. They were promised a loan for poultry but instead they got pumping set. Now at the time of recovery they have to run away from their village (to be concluded).

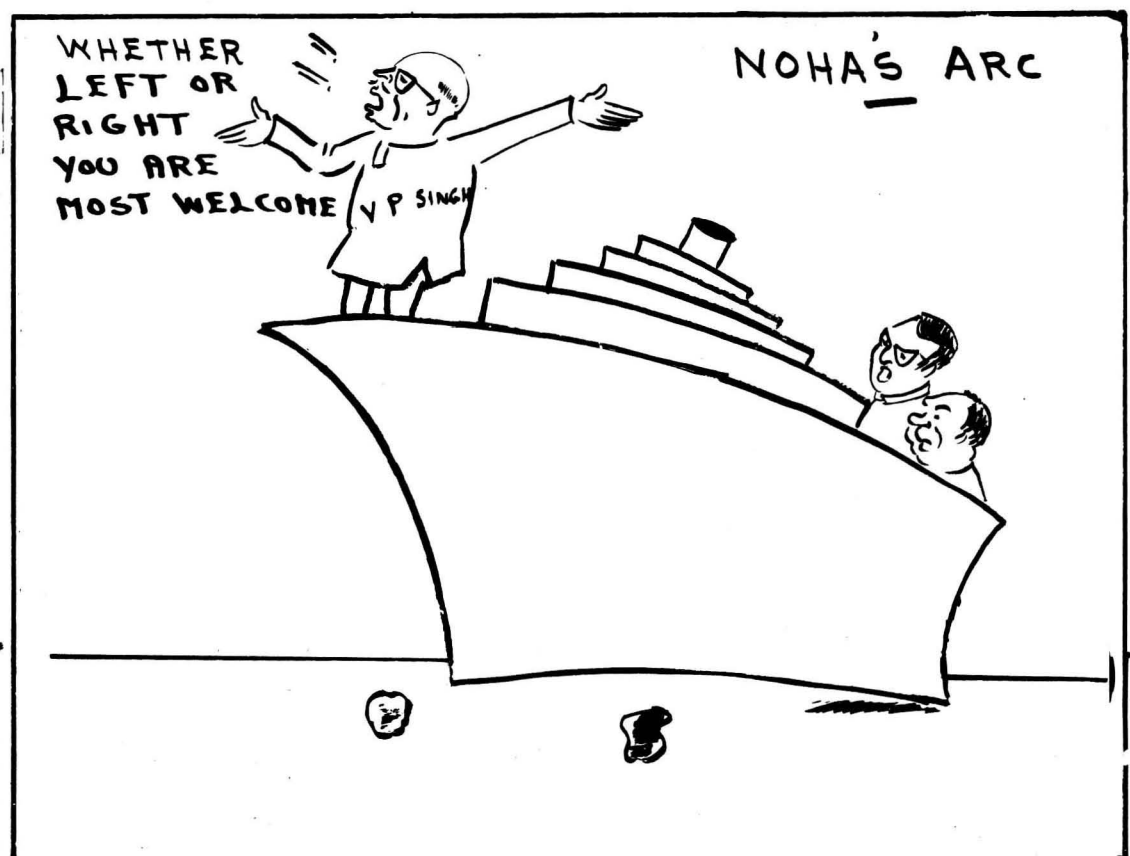
Contributions Towards Bihar Flood Victims



The Sikh Forum unit and Sikh Sangat of Chas and Bokaro steel city last month donated 7 days food packets for 1100 families suffering from floods in Bihar. The picture above shows S. V.S. Johar and S. A. S. Bindra president and Secretary of the Sikh Forum Chas-Bokaro handing over food packets to S. D. O. Chas.

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Students Kirtan Darbar at Guru Harkrishna Public School

Shri Guru Harkrishan Public School India Gate New Delhi organised the Mata Sundri inter school shabad kirtan competition in the first week of October. A large number of Delhi Schools participated in it. Mrs. Bhagwant Kaur Aurora wife of Lt. Gen. J.S. Aurora

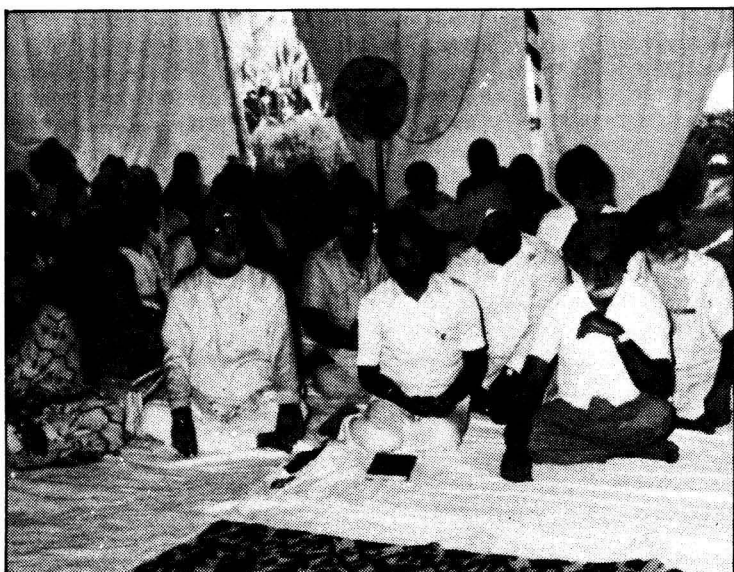
(retd.) gave away prizes and certificates to the winners. According to s. Lakshman Singh Boparai, the principal of the school this annual competition has been very successful in encouraging the school going children towards humanistic values of Sikhism



A participating group reciting Shabad Kiran.



Mrs. Bhagwant Kaur giving away a prize to a young participant.



A section of the audience.

The essence of lying is deception, not in words; a lie may be told by silence, by equivocation, by a glance of the eye attaching a peculiar significance to a sentence. All these kinds of lies are worse and baser by many degrees than a lie plainly worded.

—Ruskin

Badal complains of illtreatment

LUDHIANA, Oct 16-Mr Parkash Singh Badal, a former Chief Minister, is sore over the treatment being meted out to the political prisoners.

In a letter, dated September 15, to Col Chanan Singh Dhillon (retired), Vice-President of the Indian Minorities and Dalit Front, Mr Badal stated that the behaviour of the Government was worst than that of the Britishers.

The letter was received by Colonel Dhillon only three days

back.

Mr Badal has stated that the government was keen on keeping them in a solitary confinement and away from the home States. "The government treats political prisoners as criminals."

He received letters irregularly at times after a month or not at all.

Colonel Dhillon has sought the release of the detained Akali leaders.

Anti Terrorist Act being Misused

The Sikh Forum in a press note has expressed its concern against Political Misuse of Anti terrorist Act, Lt. Gen. J.S. Aurora, president of the forum pointed that the arrest of Jathedar Harcharan Singh, S. Birbahadur Singh, member of SGPC and 3 other Sikhs is blatant misuse of Anti Terrorist Act. According to the information available in the forums' Office both these persons were arrested from their houses and not from the Gurdwara Bangla Sahib as stated by the police.

These arrests are apparently politically motivated as both these persons have been arrested just a few days before the election of the office bearers of SGPC. We consider this as total violation of democratic rights of the people.

S. Harcharan Singh and S. Birbahadur Singh were present in the convention called by Prof. Darshan Singh, Jathedar of Sri Akal Takhat on 4th August 1987. They unequivocally condemned violence and extortion and supported the stand taken by Darshan Singh. Such high-handedness by the authorities and abuse of the Anti Terrorist Act only erodes confidence in the public mind and must be stopped. There seems to be no reason what-so-ever to keep them behind the bars and they must be released immediately.

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Tibet's Past

Continued from page 16

the war against Japan when China's own survival was at stake, Chiang Kai-Shek ordered the two Western warlords, the Governors of Tsing Hai and Sinking to invade Tibet. But the orders were not carried out.

Tibet came out of the war Unscathed as a peaceful and united country, and was definitely an independent nation by all the accepted canons of International Law and custom-historical, geographical, cultural and linguistic. Tibet had achieved independence six years before Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Baltic States and Finland, which emerged from the ashes of the First World War.

But unlike these states Tibet did not apply for membership to the League of Nations and its legal status was so ambiguous that in 1950 when the Chinese "liberated" Tibet, to restore China's loose suzerainty, the Tibetans had no firm ground in International Law for pleading sovereign rights against alien aggression. China was able to claim in 1951 that its military conquest of Tibet was matter solely within its own domestic jurisdiction and that during the whole period of Tibet's de facto independence, from 1912, Tibet

never received international recognition as a de jure sovereign state.

British Policy

This was caused by a British policy which aimed at dealing with Tibet, in practice as an independent state, while avoiding the offence to China which would result by giving formal recognition to Tibet's sovereignty. In 1983 there was no longer any Chinese authority at any point on the borders of Tibet with British India, and the British had to deal with the Lhasa Government on frontier questions and those relating to trade. The right of the Tibetans to full independence was never recognized by any government in China.

The British policy was decisive because Tibet shared common frontiers only with China, Nepal, and India and no other nation had a sufficient interest to make a move towards the opening of diplomatic relations. This left Tibetans especially vulnerable, when China gained sufficient strength to turn a juridical claim in 1950 into real control.

China had fallen into pieces and although there were minor agressions by Chinese warlores against the vaguely defined and poor defended Tibetan borders, Tibet and China continued their absorbtion of the fierce nomadic tibes and even independent states which made up this inhospitable areas. But the 13th Dalai Lama did not establish Tibet's status officially as an independent nation. This remained ambiguous as no foreign state recognised Tibet as fully independent and soveriegn.

THE KIKAR TREE

BHAI VEER SINGH

*I grow upward, my march is heavenward
My face is turned to the God of the skies:
Nor village, nor city, nor place, nor hut I need in this
Word of thine, O world:
I am he who can pass his days without a roof on his
head, in rain, sunshine, hail and stom:
I love to look at the God of the skies,
I need but a small piece of ground for my roots just to
stand, to blossom, to fructify and die:
I need no raiment, nor food from thee, O world:
The rain-water is enough for me.
I drink and I grow.
I live on air, I desire naught,
I am all alone in myself, the ascetic of centuries past
and the ascetic of the centuries yet to comet
And even for me, O world:
Thou hast but an exe*

(Translated from the Punjabi Original)
By PURAN SINGH in 1917

Andhra Pradesh to Introduce State Funding of Elections

Andhra Pradesh would become the first State to adopt State funding of elections and other reforms, once the decision to bring a legislation for electroal reforms is implemented, the Chief Minister, Mr N. T. Rama Rao, told reporters here today, reports PTI.

According to the decision taken at an emergency meeting of the State Cabinet this morning, it was proposed to give 60% of the prescribed amount of election expenses to "eligible" parties and individuals who had secured at least 25% of the votes polled in the previous elections to the same posts, he said.

He felt that these reforms should be taken up at a national level to curb the "evils of booth-capturing and rigging".

The Government would try to implement the reforms from the forthcoming panchayat elections in Rangareddy district and the election of Guntur Zilla, Praja Praishad Chairman, he added.

Mr. Rama Rao said the ceiling on expenditure proposed at today's Cabinet meeting was only a recommendation and would be finalized after consultations and discussions at an all-party meeting to be convened soon. The final decision would be taken at the next Cabinet meeting, he said.

He said to save democracy and ensure its success, it was

necessary to curb "reckless and vulgar resort to money" in elections and the evils of rigging and booth-capturing. "There is a growing feeling that the will of the people as recorded in their votes is no longer the free and true will exercised by deliberate choice", he said.

The Chief Minister said the proposed law would fix a ceiling on election expenditure by the candidates and lay down that the expenditure incurred by the parties should not be on the campaign of individual candidates. Parties could campaign on their policies and achievements and publicize their manifestos, but posters by the parties which name individual candidates would be deemed to have been issued by the candidates and the costs included in their expenses.

"No candidate set up by a political party or an independent candidate can receive any monetary or non-monetary assistance from any person or agency other than the Government for the elections", Mr Rama Rao, said. Donations, subscription loans or any such form of assistance to a contesting candidate, he said, would be prohibited.

Only posters accounted for and cleared by the approving authority could be put up at notified places only and violation of the rule could result

in the candidate being disqualified for future elections.

Only 10 days would be allowed for canvassing. Distribution of money or intoxicants and other such malpractices would be made cognizable offences and prosecution launched against offenders, he said.

The ceiling on election expenses, Mr. Rama Rao said, would be Rs.10,000 for that of mandal praja parishad and Rs.1 lakh for direct election as mayor of a municipal corporation. For chairmanship of municipalities, the ceiling would be Rs.35,000 for special and selection grade municipalities, Rs.15,000 for grade I and grade II, Rs.10,000 for grade III, Rs.1,000 for corporatpors and Rs.500 for municipal councillors.

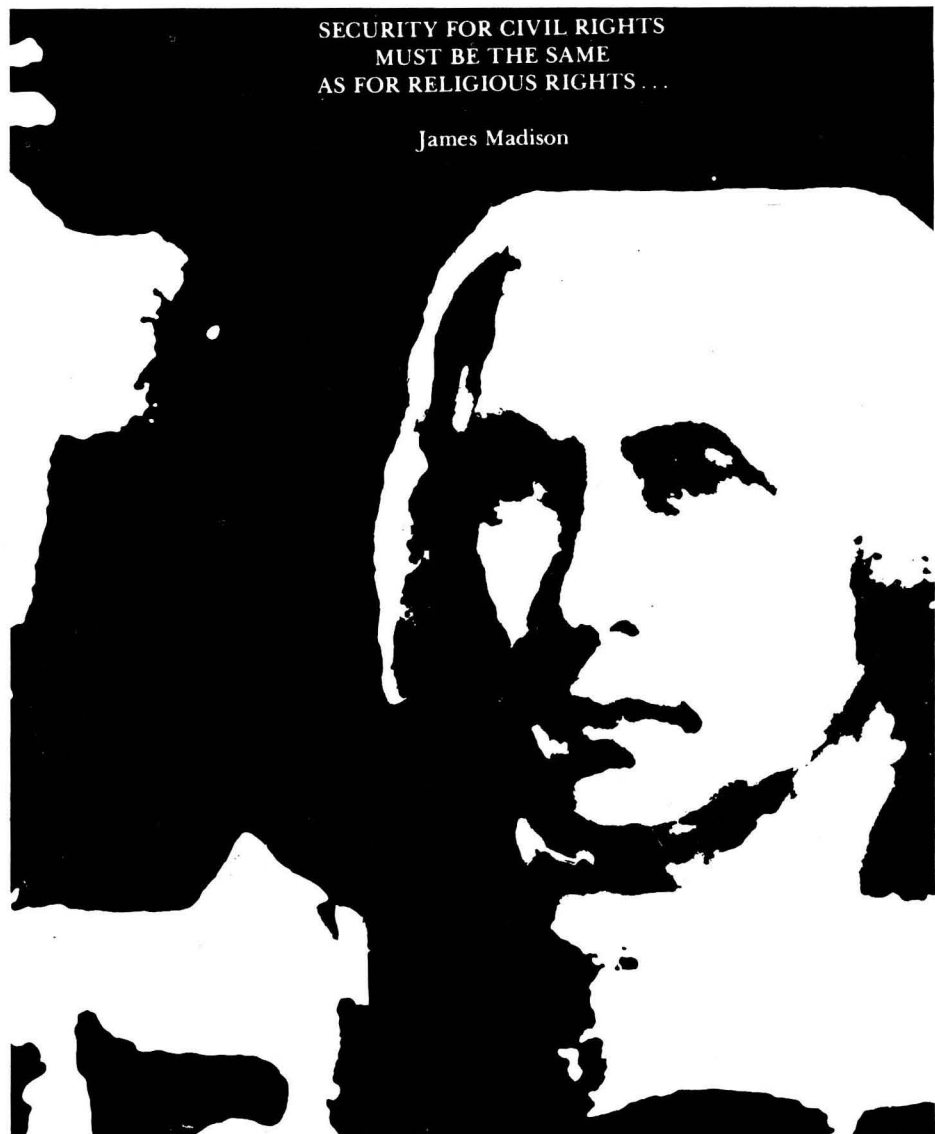
The Chief Minister said proposed rules would be implemented through the Commissioner for Panchayat Raj.

He said the role of big money in elections today was keeping out intellectuals and good people from the electoral battles. "People should not be denied the opportunity or contesting elections simply because they are poor", he said.

A note on the electoral reforms was given to the Ministers at yesterday's regular Cabinet meeting and the discussion put off to today to give them time to study the proposals, he said.

SECURITY FOR CIVIL RIGHTS
MUST BE THE SAME
AS FOR RELIGIOUS RIGHTS...

James Madison



"Tibet's Misty Past"

Karan Sawhny

Were it not for China's people's liberation Army, Geography too would isolate Tibet from the rest of the world as it has done for hundreds of years. An extremely poor country nestled between the wastes of central Asia and the Himalayas, Tibet was inhabited by a hardy mountain people called "ferocious barbarian shepherds" by the Chinese of the Seventh Century.

It was only then that Tibet was united for the first time, when a ruthless King, Tsong-Tsen-Gampo (Straight-Strong-Deep) at the head of a powerful Army crushed numerous petty kingdoms and tribal states and over ran also large slices of China. He married a Chinese bride as well as Nepalese princess, who civilised him, converting him to Buddhism, which then became the official religion of the country.

Lamaism evolved, from the merging of Mahayana Buddhism with the indigenous animistic religion and gradually covered the whole of Tibet. The Lamas eventually assumed direct political power subduing the nobility and transforming the kings into the puppets. A line of king-lamas began when the abbot of the great Sakya monastery ruled western Tibet. China had fallen to the Mongols, but the Mongol emperor of China, Kublai Kahn, converted to Lamasim and received the blessing of the king-lama of Sakya. In exchange the king lama was recognised as the legitimate ruler of the whole of Tibet.

Lamas Corrupted

For several generations the Sakya pontiffs ruled Tibet unchallenged. Political power corrupted the Lamas. Then a far-reaching reformation of Lamaism took place, which revived a purer form of Buddhism, emphasising celibacy and a puritan way of life. The followers of "the way of virtue" came to be known as the "Yellow Hats", distinct from the "Red Hats" of the unreformed clergy (who are still powerful in Indian Ladakh and the Kingdom of Bhutan).

The reformer Trong-Ka-Pa (Man from the land of Onions) came to be known as the "Second Buddha", and his followers the "Yellow Hats" eventually got overall supremacy with the creation of the Dalai Lamas. It was however

only the Fifth Dalai Lama, the forceful and ruthless Lobzang who established the enduring rule of the God-Kings, by destroying the power of the King-Lama of Tsang and the abbot of Sakya. He converted most unreformed priests to his creed and endowed himself with the most awe inspiring power ever vested in a politico-religious ruler, by fulfilling the triple role of chief priest, temporal ruler and the divine incarnate. More "Living Buddhas" came into being and were enthroned in the Large monasteries of whom the most important was the line of the Pancheng Lama, the first of whom was Lobzang's old teacher.

Following the Great Fifth's death, there was a period of disorder and anarchy in Tibet and the Tibetans appealed to the Chinese, who under the strong rule of the new Manchu dynasty established a loose suzerainty over Tibet, in the form of two Chinese mandarin residents-the Ambans, who exercised the real political power. The Manchus consolidated their political power for two centuries by systematically poisoning all Dalai Lamas, upto and including the 12th, before they reached their majority at the age of 18.

In 1894 when the 13th Dalai Lama reached the fateful age of 18, the Tibetans staged a revolt and crowned the Dalai Lama over the loud protests of the ambans. They sensed that the Chinese Empire was disintegrating and in 1911-12 when the Chinese revolution swept the Manchu Emperor off his throne the Tibetans wiped out all Chinese garrisons in their country, and became defacto independent. The Viceroy of British India however had invaded Tibet in 1903, occupying Lhasa, and began a complex game of power politics with the signing of a formal treaty between Tibet and Britain, although not recognising Tibet as a fully independent country.

Tibetan Understanding

But the Tibetans themselves soon enough began to understand that independence was the only real solution to their problems. In 1909 the Empress Dowager of China, Tza Hsi had launched a full scale invasion of Tibet, with the intention of incorporating it into her empire. The 13th Dalai

Lama was forced to flee to India and sought refuge in Kalimpong, a journey similar in many respects to the one undertaken by the 14th Dalai Lama in 1959. But the revolution of 1911 solved this problem and between 1911 and 1950 Tibet ruled itself in all respects as an independent nation.

China had fallen into pieces and although there were minor aggressions by Chinese warlords against the vaguely defined and poor defended Tibetan borders, Tibet and China continued their absorption of the fierce nomadic tribes and even

independent states which made up this inhospitable area. But the 13th Dalai Lama did not establish Tibet's status officially as an independent nation. This remained ambiguous as no foreign state recognised Tibet as fully independent and sovereign.

Although he carried out some minor reforms and made the administration more efficient, Tibet remained, in the epoch of the 13th Dalai Lama, who was an autocrat, a medieval country.

His rift with the Panchen Lama led to the latter fleeing to China, where he eventually died. His reincarnation was

"discovered" by Chiang-Kai-shek's agents and later was used by Communist China to plague the Tibetans.

Dalai Lama

In 1933, the 13th Dalai Lama died. The fourteenth incarnation, the present Dalai Lama was enthroned only in February 1940, with Tibet being ruled by a Regent until he attained the age of 18. The shifting of the capital of China to Chungking during the II World War stimulated anew that country's imperialistic interests in Tibet. In 1943, in the midst of

Continued on page 15

MASSES NEEDED IT

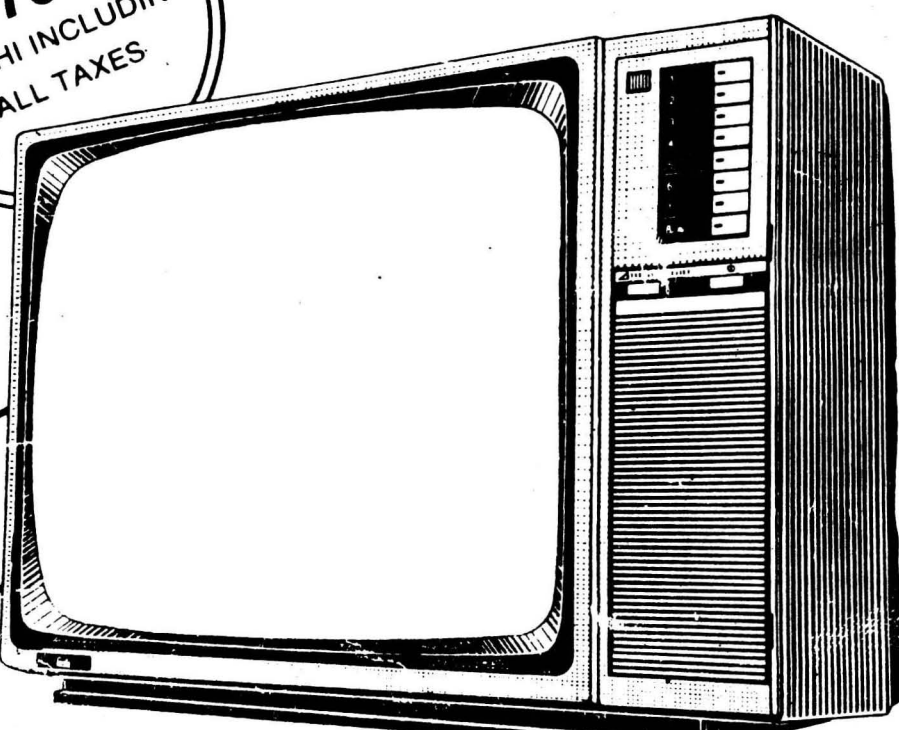
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